महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyasa

BOOK XII

THE COMPLETE SANTI PARVA

TRANSCREATED FROM SANSKRIT

By P. Lal

THE MAHĀBHĀRATA OF VYĀSA

The Complete Śānti Parva (Part 1 : Rāja-Dharma)
Transcreated śloka-by-śloka from Sanskrit by P. Lāl

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Two birds sit
on the golden bough
of the pippala tree.
One eats
the sweet fruit.
The other watches.
Both are happy.
One is happier.
Which?

Śvetāśvatara
Upaniṣad IV : 6

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महाभारत

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated by P. Lāl from the Sanskrit

BOOK TWELVE

The Complete Śānti Parva

PART ONE: RĀJA-DHARMA

The Transcreator

P. Lāl is honorary Professor of English in St. Xavier's College, Calcutta. He was Special Professor of Indian Studies at Hofstra University, New York, 1962-63, and has lectured widely on Indian literature at English, American, and Australian universities. He was a delegate from India to the P. E. N. International Writers Conference in New York in June 1966, and Visiting Professor in the University of Illinois for the spring semester of 1968. Transcreated the Bṛhadāraṇyaka and Mahānārānayaṇa Upaniṣads on a Jawaharlal Nehru Fellowship award in 1969-70. Visiting Professor of Comparative Literature, Hofstra University, spring 1971. Distinguished Visiting Professor and Consultant, Albion College, April-May 1972. Prentiss M. Brown Distinguished Visiting Professor, Albion College, January-May 1973. Robert Norton Visiting Professor, Ohio University, September 1973-June 1974. Visiting Professor of Indian Culture, Hartwick College, September-October 1975. Eli Lilly Visiting Professor, Berea College, February-May 1977. Honorary Doctorate of Letters, Western Maryland College, 1977. Currently at work on the complete English version of the Mahābhārata. Born 1928, married Shyamasree Devi 1955; has a son Ananda, and a daughter Srimati. Recipient of the Padma Shri award in 1970. Delegate to Asian Poets' Conference, Bangkok, 1988; Cambridge Literary Seminar, 1989; Harborfront Poetry Reading Series, Toronto, Canada, 1989. Appointed Suniti Kumar Chatterji Lecturer of the Asiatic Society, Kolkata in June 2005. D. Litt. (Hon. Course) of Calcutta University for his "transcreation of the *Mahabharata*", 2006. Distinguished Professor Award for Lifetime Achievement, St. Xavier's College, 2007. Seventy five cassettes (each of 90 minutes' duration) of P. Lāl reading his transcreation of Vyāsa's *Mahābhārata* are available from WRITERS WORKSHOP. In October 1999 P. Lal began a śloka-by-śloka public reading of the transcreated epic to a miscellaneous group every Sunday morning for an hour at the Library of Dharma and Culture in Calcutta to illustrate the importance of Vyāsa's work as an inspiring *oral* experience and not just a print-culture masterpiece. 450 hour-long CDs of this recording, taped live are available from WW. P. Lal reads his *Mahabharata* transcreation daily on cable Tara TV Newz at 7:20 am & 7.20 pm. followed by a 6-segment repeat telecast on Sundays, and twice weekly on TV Southasia network.

Preface

The structure of the Śāntī Parva is simplicity itself. It is split into two parts: Rāja-dharma and Mokṣa-dharma: Secular justice and Spiritual justice. Is "justice" a satisfactory equivalent for "dharma"? Since there is no word for "forgiveness" in Sanskrit, some insight into the nature of crime and punishment is called for. Karma is relentless and ruthless: there is no escape from cause and effect. Good fruits will exactly come from good karma; evil fruits from evil. The word *kṣamā* has a multiplicity of meanings, the last being "forgiveness", *kṣamā* means endurance, fortitude, ability to absorb, ability to accept and tolerate. Grace has no place in the Mahābhārata world-view. Even the gods are subject to the resistless play of karma. These is no word for miracle either in Sanskrit. How can there be violations in the play of cause and effect in a universe ruled by inescapable cosmic karma? Rod of punishment, dispensation of justice – the root of dharma is indeed the concept and implementation of secular justice.

So, in the Śānti Parva, Bhīṣma on his bed of arrows explores and explains artha, kāma, dharma and mokṣa. In the end of the final parva, the Svargārohaṇa, Vyāsa almost despairingly declares: "I lift my arms and I shout, and no one listens: 'From dharma comes artha and kāma – why is dharma then not practised?'"

Well, we hear – it is an oral epic – but we don't listen. We read – and we do not understand. Such a shame! Vyāsa's wisdom is simple, like all true wisdom. The four goals of life – *puruṣārthas* – are, of course, artha, kāma, dharma and mokṣa. Without artha, meaning wealth, nothing happens. No progress, no prosperity, no yajñas, no *dakṣiṇās*, no financial bonanzas, no charities. But money is the root of all evil – a warning explicitly given in one scripture. How can the root of all evil be the goal of life? Vyāsa is simple, but he is not unsubtle. Look up any dictionary, and the first meaning of artha is "meaning"; "wealth" is the secondary meaning. What matters, cautions Vyāsa, is not money but the meaning of money. Wealth is to be pursued to benefit others, not oneself. Only by benefiting others does one benefit oneself.

Kāma is the name of Kandarpa, the god of passion and lust. But it is also the name of the Hindu god of love who shoots fragrant flowery arrows at his charmed human targets. What matters, cautions Vyāsa, is the transformation of lust into love. Sex is the inescapable instinct, the root of all life; lust is the perversion, love the sweet fruit. Both are four-letter words; it's our disciplined choice that changes one into the other.

Dharma means religion with all its complex institutionalisation and rituals. But dharma also means the transcendental and mystical experience of spiritual vision. The goal, therefore, is the transformation of ritual into spiritual, the conventional into the creative.

Mokṣa means escape, but it also means liberation. How many so-called swāmīs and sādhus are escaping from life's responsibilities, how many getting liberated? Transform escape into liberation, advises Vyāsa, if you really desire to experience mokṣa.

ऊर्ध्वबाहुर्विचरौम्येष
न च कश्चिच्छृणोति मे।
धर्मादर्थश्च कामश्च
स किमर्थं न सेव्यते॥ (18:1:62)

All this is the sub-text of the Śāntī Parva. After all, isn't one of the fundamental messages of Hinduism that everything in this world comes with its built-in opposite? Man-woman, night-day, good-evil, *sura-asura*, right-wrong, heads and tails . . . Even words are "things", even they have opposites.



Dedication

To
VYĀSA
through whose grace
we receive
the wisdom of the Mahābhārata
व्यासं नमस्कृत्य

and also
to a less renowned of course
but equally important personality
a lady whose generous gifts
of sumptuous fruits
and medical equipment for my ileostomy
and of other etcetera
provided essential sustenance
during the difficult period
of transcreation
of the complex and profound insights
embedded in the Śānti Parva's ślokas

नारायणं नमस्कृत्य
नरं चैव नरोत्तमम् ।
देवीं सरस्वतीं व्यासं
ततो जयमुदीरयेत् ॥

Nārāyaṇaṁ namaskṛtya
Naraṁ caiva Narottamaṁ ।
Devīṁ Sarasvatīm Vyāsaṁ
tato jayaṁ udīrayet ॥

INVOCATION ~

We namaskāra Nārāyaṇa!
We namaskāra Nara!
We namaskāra finest-of-men Narottama!
We namaskāra Devī Sarasvatī!
We namaskāra Vyāsa!
May victory attend us. We exclaim Jaya!

SECTION ONE

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Pāṇḍu's sons,
Vidura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and the Bharata ladies
performed the water-rituals
for their dear departed.

2 The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas spent a full month
on the banks of the Gaṅgā
outside the city
to complete their purification.

3 After he had completed
the water-rituals,
Dharma's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was visited
by many mahātmā *siddhas*
and excellent Brahmā-ṛṣis.

4 Born-on-an-island Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,
Nārada,
the mahā-ṛṣi Devala,
Devasthāna, Kaṇva
and many excellent disciples
visited him.

5 Also visiting
the splendid Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira
were many twice-born
pragmatic and wise-in-the Vedas,
householders, *snātaka* novices,
and saintly men.

6 Receiving the tradition-ordained
pūjā-respect,
the mahātmā mahā-ṛṣis
sat comfortably
on luxurious seats
reserved for them.

7 Hundreds of thousands
received respect and gifts
at that time,
and they sat
around Yudhiṣṭhira
in a circle.

8 On the banks
of the Bhāgirathī-Gaṅgā
the twice-born sat,
offering whatever solace
they could
to grief-gripped rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

9 Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
conversed with Nārada
and the munis for a while;
then Nārada chose out
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
and said to him:

10 "With the valour of your arms,
with the grace
of Mādhava-Krishna
and the power of dharma,
you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
have conquered the earth.

11 Son of Pāṇḍu! Fortunate you are
to have survived
this calamitous conflict.
Tell me,
O delighter-in-Kṣatriya-dharma,
are you happy?

12 Your enemies are all dead.
Tell me, king,
are you happy with your friends?
No doubts, no grief,
after gaining all this glory,
this prosperity?"

13 "This victory came to me,"
replied Yudhiṣṭhira,
"through the strength
of Krishna's muscular arms,
the grace of Brahmins,
and Arjuna and Bhīma's valour.

14 But one mahā-sorrow
haunts my heart,
which is this –
motivated by greed,
I committed this mahā-murder
of my kith and kin.

15 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
This victory –
what is it but defeat
since Subhadrā's son Abhimanyu
and Draupadī's dear sons
are all dead?

16 What will Madhusūdana-Krishna
tell my Vṛṣṇi daughter-in-law
Subhadrā,
who is now in Dvārakā,
when he leaves here
and goes to Dvārakā?

17 And traumatised Draupadī,
always dedicated to our welfare,
her sons dead,
her relatives dead –
grief grips me
when I look at her.

18

Nārada! *Bhagavan*!
    Revered one!
Another grief haunts me –
    our mother Kuntī
kept Karṇa's birth
    secret from us –

19

Who had the strength
    of ten thousand elephants,
who was the world's
    unparalleled chariot-hero,
lion-like in war, generous,
    self-controlled, strict-vowed,

20

Mainstay of Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons,
    self-confident, fearless,
incredibly valiant, quick-to-anger,
    and always ready
to test war-weapons on us
    in battle after battle,

21

Swift weapons-wielder,
    versatile warrior, brilliant bow-expert,
wonder-worker in war,
    our brother,
Kuntī's own son,
    conceived in her womb in secret.

22

After the water-ritual,
    Kuntī confessed
all-guṇa-possessing Karṇa was Sūrya's son
    born in her womb,
whom she floated away
    in the river after birth.

23

She placed him in a basket
    and sent him away
on the waters of the Gaṅgā.
    The charioteer's son
whom the world knew
    as Rādhā's son –

24 He was Kuntī's son, her eldest,
our own brother.
I did not know.
Motivated by greed
for a kingdom,
I made one brother kill another.

25 I think of this,
and my body burns,
like cotton in fire.
White-horsed Śvetavāhana Arjuna
did not know
the secret either.

26 I, Bhīma, the twins did not know;
but strict-vowed Karṇa knew
we were his brothers.
I have heard
our mother Pṛthā-Kuntī
went to him,

27 To make peace among brothers,
and said to him,
'You are my son.'
But mahātmā Karṇa
refused the plea
of Pṛthā-Kuntī.

28 I have also heard he said
to his mother:
'There is no way
I will abandon
king Duryodhana
on the battlefield,

29 For that will show me
as un-āryan,
cruel and ungrateful.
If, as you want me to,
I make peace now
with Yudhiṣṭhira,

30 What will people say?
"He is afraid to fight
Śvetavāhana-Arjuna.
Let me first defeat
Keśava-Krishna
and Arjuna,

31 And then think
of making peace
with Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira.'
That's what Karṇa said.
Pṛthā-Kuntī then said
to her broad-chested son:

32 'Fight Phālguna-Arjuna.
But spare
the other four brothers.'
His mother said this, trembling.
Intelligent Karṇa
folded his palms in *añjali*

33 And said, 'Devī!
I will not kill
four of your sons.
You will always
have five sons living,
I promise.

34 If Arjuna lives, Karṇa dies.
If Karṇa lives,
Arjuna dies.'
Seeking the welfare
of her sons,
their mother said:

35 'Keep in mind
the welfare
of your four brothers.'
Saying this,
she went back
to her home.

36 That very brother of ours,
our heroic brother,
was killed by Arjuna.
O radiant one!
Both Kuntī and Karṇa
kept well this secret.

37 O finest of the twice-born!
Pārtha-Arjuna slew
the valiant mahā-archer Karṇa.
I got to know
about the secret much later
from my mother.

38 Pṛthā-Kuntī said:
'Karṇa was your eldest brother.'
Much later she said this.
I am responsible
for my brother's murder.
My heart burns.

39 With Karṇa and Arjuna's help,
I could have defeated
even Vāsava-Indra.
When Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
insulted us
in the sabhā,

40 I chanced to glance at Karṇa,
and I felt
a strange calm come over me.
When I heard him speak
so roughly
and bitterly,

41 In the sabhā, about us,
and wishing Duryodhana well
in the dice-game,
I chanced to glance at his feet,
and suddenly my anger
seemed to fade away.

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42 The feet of Karṇa –
they were exactly the feet
of our mother Kuntī!
How could it be –
Pṛthā-Kuntī's feet, and his –
the same!

43 I thought and thought –
it baffled me –
how could it be?
Why did his wheel
get stuck in the mud
on the battlefield?

44 Who was it who cursed
my elder brother?
Tell me, I beg of you.
Revered one, *bhagavan,*
tell me all, that and all else,
before and after."

SECTION TWO

1 As requested by Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
finest of eloquent speakers
Nārada-muni
narrated the details of the curse
on the charioteer's son.

2 O descendant of Bharata!
(said Nārada)
O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
You are right.
Nothing was impossible in war
for Karṇa and Arjuna.

3 O blameless mahā-muscled one!
What I will tell you,
even the gods don't know.
Listen to what happened in the past.

4 *Prabhu*! Lord Yudhiṣṭhira!
The problem was to make war-weapons
the means of transporting Kṣatriyas
to heaven.
So, a friction-fostering foetus
was placed in a virgin womb.

5 This fiery child was Sūta-putra,
the charioteer's son.
He received his training
in bowcraft
from the finest guru Droṇa
of the Aṅgiras lineage.

6 O Indra-among-rājās!
Bhīma's strength,
Phālguna-Arjuna's dexterity,
your intelligence,
the humility of Nakula
and Sahadeva,

7 The loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friendship
of Vāsudeva-Krishna
and Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna
from their very boyhood,
and the popularity of the Pāṇḍavas
made him burn with jealousy.

8 So from his boyhood
he became a *sakhā*
of rājā Duryodhana.
Fate and his nature
combined to make him
hostile to you.

9 One day, seeing Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
excelling in practice
of bowcraft,
Karṇa approached Droṇa
in secret,
and said:

10 “I want to be the equal
of Arjuna in battle.
I want to learn the secret
of shooting
and aborting
the Brahmā-missile.

11 You make no distinction
between son
and sincere student.
You love both equally.
By your grace, let none say
I failed in weapons-skill.”

12 Seeing through the ill-ātmaned motive
of Karṇa,
Droṇa, who was partial
to Phālguna-Arjuna,
replied
to Karṇa:

13 “Only a scrupulously
strict-vowed Brahmin
or a tapasyā-devoted Kṣatriya
can handle
the Brahmā-missile.
No one else.”

14 Karṇa listened to the advice
of Aṅgiras-Droṇa,
offered him pūjā-respect,
and proceeded
to Mahendra mountain,
the abode of Paraśurāma.

15 He stood before Paraśurāma,
lowered his head in *praṇāma*,
and said:
“I am a Bhārgava Brahmin.”
This earned him appropriate respect
from the guru.

16 Paraśurāma enquired
about his *gotra* and other details,
and said, "Stay here.
You are welcome."
He was very pleased
with Karṇa.

17 Living on lovely-as-heaven
Mahendra mountain,
Karṇa had opportunities
of meeting gandharvas,
rākṣasas, yakṣas
and gods.

18 Under the tutelage
of finest-of-Bhṛgus Paraśurāma,
Karṇa practised bowcraft
on Mahendra mountain,
becoming the loved one of gods,
Dānava antigods, and rākṣasas.

19 It so happened one day,
Sūrya's son Karṇa,
carrying bow, arrows and sword,
was roaming alone
near an āshram situated
beside a sea beach.

20 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
A Veda-chanting Brahmin
was performing the *agnihotṛ* ritual,
and Karṇa, unknowingly,
killed the cow
of the *homa* sacrifice.

21 Because what he did
was done unknowingly,
Karṇa explained to the Brahmin
what had happened,
and sought his pardon,
saying:

22 "*Bhāgavan*! Revered one!
I did not know.
By mistake I killed your cow.
Be gracious to me."
He kept repeating this
again and again.

23 The incensed Brahmin shouted
this bitter denunciation:
"Wicked murderer!
You deserve to die!
Ill-minded wretch!
You will pay for this!

24 You criminal!
When you battle those
whom you envy
and wish to destroy,
the earth will swallow
your chariot-wheel.

25 You utter scoundrel!
Your wheel
will stick in the mud,
you will be half-senseless.
Then your enemy will slice off your head.
Go!

26 You fool!
You killed a careless cow.
So will you be killed,
and your head
sliced by your foe,
when you are careless."

27 After the curse was cast,
Karṇa tried to placate the Brahmin
with lavish gifts
of cows and gold
and precious gems.
The Brahmin said:

28 "All the three worlds cannot
falsify my curse.
Go! Or stay! It does not matter.
Do what you like!"

29 The Brahmin's curse terrified Karṇa.
Head lowered humbly,
lost in fearful introspection,
he returned to Paraśurāma.

SECTION THREE

1 Tiger-brave Bhṛgu Paraśurāma
(continued Nārada),
was profoundly pleased
by Karṇa's
muscular valour,
loving nature,
self-control,
and guru-dedication.

2 Firm-in-tapasyā Paraśurāma
duly instructed
firm-in-tapasyā Karṇa
in the secret
of shooting and aborting
the Brahmā-missile.

3 After his training,
Karṇa stayed on
in Paraśurāma's āshram.
He devoted himself
with full energy
to bowcraft practice.

4 It so happened one day,
while Karṇa
and Paraśurāma were walking
near the āshram,
that Paraśurāma, who was on a fast,
felt tired.

5 Jamadagni-Paraśurāma,
whose trust and affection
for Karṇa
were total,
placed his tired head
in Karṇa's lap.

6 And then it happened –
a fearsome insect,
that subsisted on marrow,
fat, flesh and blood,
whose very touch was agony,
crawled near Karṇa's thigh.

7 It stung Karṇa,
and started sucking his blood.
Afraid he might wake his guru,
Karṇa
did not flick it away
nor did he squash it.

8 The insect stung him
again and again.
O Bharata descendant!
Sūrya's son Karṇa
patiently bore the pain,
for fear of waking Paraśurāma.

9 The pain was excruciating.
The endurance
was equally incredible.
Bhārgava Paraśurāma
reposed peacefully
in Karṇa's lap.

10 But a trickle of blood
slipped on the body
of the incomparable Bhārgava,
who woke up
in a fright,
and exclaimed:

11 "Aho! What's this!
I am polluted!
What are you doing?
What's all this?
Don't be afraid.
Tell me the truth."

12 Then Karṇa told him
about the insect.
Paraśurāma saw
the crawling creature.
It was a hog-shaped
little beast.

13 Eight feet.
Sharp teeth
Needle-sharp
Bristling hair.
A shrunken creature
Known as the *alarka.*

14 And then
an incredible thing happened!
As soon as Paraśurāma's gaze
fell on it,
the blood-smeared creature dissolved
in its own blood!

15 In its place there appeared,
out of the sky,
riding the clouds,
a red-necked,
black-skinned, gruesome,
gigantic rākṣasa.

16 His wish fulfilled,
the rākṣasa greeted Paraśurāma
with palms folded in *añjali;*
"O tiger-brave Bhārgava!
May you prosper!
As I came, so I will go.

17 O finest of all munis!
You have saved me from this hell!
May you prosper!
Bhadram tavāstu!
I revere you. You have done me
the greatest favour."

18 The mahā-muscled, celebrated son
of Jamadagni Paraśurāma
said to him:
"Who are you?
How did you fall in this hell?
Tell me."

19 The rākṣasa said: "*Tāta*! Dear one!
A long time ago,
in the Deva-yuga,
I was the mahā-antigod Daṁśa,
as glorious
as Bhṛgu himself.

20 I raped
the dearly-beloved wife of Bhṛgu,
and the mahā-ṛṣi cursed me,
and I fell,
and I became a crawling insect
on earth.

21 Cursing me, your *pitāmaha*-ancestor
Bhṛgu added:
'Despicable criminal!
You will live in hell,
feeding
on urine and spit.'

22 I said to him: 'Brahmin!
There must be an end
to this curse.'
And Bhṛgu said:
'Bhārgava Paraśurāma
will end this curse.'

23 That is how I fell
in this hell
of unrelieved misery.
O saintly one!
You came, and saved me
from this criminal *yoni.*"

24 Saying this, the mahā-antigod
namaskāra-ed Paraśurāma,
and left.
And Paraśurāma
angrily said
to Karṇa:

25 "You fool!
No Brahmin can endure
such agony.
Your fortitude shows
you are a Kṣatriya.
Out with it – the truth!"

26 Fearful of being cursed,
to please Paraśurāma,
Karṇa confessed: "O Bhārgava!
I am a Sūta,
of mixed Brahmin
and Kṣatriya blood.

27 That is why I am known by all
as Karṇa Rādheya,
son of Rādhā
O Bhārgava Brahmin!
I longed to be a weapons-expert.
Forgive me.

28 A guru who grants Veda-wisdom
is like a lord,
like one's own father.
No doubt of that.
That is why I said my *gotra*
was that of a Bhārgava."

29 Finest-of-the-Bhṛgus Paraśurāma
was so incensed it seemed his wrath
would consume Karṇa.
Palms folded in *añjali,*
quaking Karṇa prostrated himself.
Paraśurāma said:

30 "Greedy for weapons-skill,
you were dishonest with me.
You fool!
All your knowledge
of the Brahmā-missile
will desert you in the end

31 When you are battling
with an adversary
who is your equal.
No non-Brahmin
can ever fully master
the Brāhma-missile.

32 Go! You are not fit
to stay any longer
in a place like this.
No Kṣatriya, however,
will ever equal you
on the battlefield."

33 Karṇa heard the words
of Paraśurāma
and dutifully left.
He went
to Duryodhana
and informed him:
"I am now a master
of all war-weapons."

SECTION FOUR

1 Learning from Bhārgava Paraśurāma
weapons-expertise
(continued Nārada), Karṇa happily
kept company with Duryodhana.

2 O bull-brave Bharata rājā!
Around this time, many rājās
from many lands gathered at the *svayaṁvara*
organised by the Kaliṅga rājā Citrāṅgada.

3 O Bharata descendant!
In Rājāpura,
the magnificent capital
of Kaliṅga,
gathered hundreds of rājās
for the princess's hand.

4 When news reached Duryodhana
of the *svayaṁvara*,
and of all the competing earth-lords,
taking Karṇa with him
he went in a golden chariot
to the capital.

5 O finest of kings!
Here are some
of the names of the kings
who were present
at the princess's splendid
svayaṁvara mahotsava:

6 Śiśupāla,
Jarāsaṁdha,
Bhīṣmaka, Baka,
Kapotaromā, Nīla,
and the truly valiant
Rukmin,

7 Mahārāja Śṛgāla,
the lord of Strīrājya,
the kingdom of women;
Aśoka,
Śatadhanvā,
Bhoja and Vīra.

8 These and many others
from the south
were present;
also the rājās
of east and north,
and Mlecchas and Āryas.

9 All glittering
with golden body-ornaments,
all dazzling
like the purest *jambu*-gold,
all shining-complexioned,
all tiger-valiant.

10 O descendant of Bharata!
After all the rājās
were comfortably seated,
the girl entered,
with her female companions
and eunuch guards.

11 Then, O Bharata descendant,
as the names of the rājās
were announced,
one by one,
the lovely girl paused near Duryodhana,
and passed on.

12 Kaurava Duryodhana
could not brook
her passing him by.
In front of all the earth-lords,
disrespectfully,
he ordered her to stop.

13
Relying on the support
of Bhīṣma and Droṇa,
proud of his valour,
earth-lord Duryodhana
pushed her in his chariot
and drove off.

14
O bull-brave hero!
Behind him,
riding his chariot,
came weapons-expert Karṇa,
one hand holding the reins,
the other a sword.

15
Eager for battle,
some rājās put on their armour,
others readied
their chariots.
What a fierce clash
then took place!

16
Like rain-filled swarms
of clouds drenching
two peaks with downpours,
the anger-filled kings
assailed Karṇa and Duryodhana
with showers of arrows.

17
Targeting all the kings
with one arrow each,
Karṇa repulsed their attack,
shattering their bows,
and littering the earth
with their baffled arrows.

18
Some had their bows shot away.
Some advanced
with uplifted bows,
with arrows,
with chariot-śakti-spears,
with maces –

19 But all were afflicted
by the dexterity
of finest-of-assailants Karṇa,
who slaughtered
their charioteers,
and many of the earth-lords as well.

20 Frustrated and out-manoeuvred,
some of the rājās
took the reins of the chariots
in their own hand,
and shouting "Run! Run!"
they fled.

21 Well protected
by Karṇa,
delighted by the outcome
of the clash,
taking the princess
with him,
Duryodhana returned
to his capital
Hastināpura,
the City of Elephants.

SECTION FIVE

1 O bull-brave Bharata!
(continued Nārada),
Hearing of Karṇa's valour,
the Magadha-rājā Jarāsamdha
challenged him
to a chariot-duel.

2 And so started the duel
between these two
masters of celestial weapons,
with each combatant
showering the other
with a variety of missiles.

3 Quivers exhausted, bows smashed,
swords splintered,
the two powerful heroes
pounded earth other with fists.

4 Using the bāhu-kaṁṭaka
ripping-apart hold,
Karṇa gripped Jarāsaṁdha
to tear apart in two
the body that had been joined
by the rākṣasī Jara.

5 Seeing his body getting
fatally twisted,
Jarāsaṁdha shed his hostility,
and said
to Karṇa:
"I am pleased with you."

6 O tiger-brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
So pleased was he
that he gifted the city
of Mālini in Aṅga
to foe-crushing Karṇa,
who thus became an Aṅga-rājā.

7 And of course you already know
that foe-crushing Karṇa
also took charge
of the city of Campā,
which was entrusted to him
by Duryodhana.

8 His military exploits made Karṇa
a world celebrity.
Seeking your welfare,
Surendra-Indra decided
he would ask Karṇa
for his flesh-armour-and-earrings.

9

Mystified by deva-māyā,
Karṇa gifted away
the celestial armour
and earrings
which he
had been born with.

10

And that was how it came to be
that,
deprived of flesh-armour-and-earrings,
Karṇa was killed
by Vijaya-Arjuna,
while Vāsudeva-Krishna watched.

11

The Brahmin's curse,
mahātmā Paraśurāma's curse,
the boon he gave
to Kuntī,
the māyā-deceit
of Śatakratu-Indra,

12

Bhīṣma branding him
as half-a-chariot-hero
in the gathering of chariot-heroes,
Śalya's bitter belittling
of his glory,
Vāsudeva-Krishna's manipulation,

13

The acquisition
from Rudra-Śiva,
the rājā of the gods Indra,
Yama, Varuṇa,
Kubera, Droṇa
and mahātmā Kṛpa,

14

Of celestial missiles
by Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna –
these are the reasons
for Vaikartana-Karṇa's death in battle –
Karṇa, who shone with the glory
of the day-making sun.

15 O tiger-brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
Cursed by many,
deceived by many,
your brother Karṇa
died bravely in battle.
So, do not grieve.

SECTION SIX

1 Having said this
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Nārada kept silent,
but rāja-ṛṣi Yudhiṣṭhira,
drowning in grief,
was lost in thought.

2 His mind pained him.
He lowered his head.
He sighed long
and deep snake-sighs.
Tears streamed
down his cheeks.

3 Seeing him in that pitiful state
made Kuntī's body burn with sorrow.
Taking stock of the situation,
she said helpfully:

4 "O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
Do not grieve
for Karṇa.
O mahā-wise one!
Listen to what
I have to say.

5 O finest of dharma-knowers!
I did try to tell Karṇa
that the Pāṇḍavas
were his brothers.
His father Bhāskara the sun-god
tried also.

6 What a friend tells another
for that friend's good,
was said by the day-making sun Divākara
to Karṇa
in a dream,
and also in my presence.

7 The sun-god Bhānu and I
both tried lovingly
to persuade him to come
to our side,
to unite him and you.
And we failed.

8 But he was a victim
of Cosmic Time Kāla,
and I realised he was bent
on harming you,
so I gave up trying
to reason with him."

9 When he heard his mother
say this,
anguish numbed the senses
of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira.
With tears in his eyes,
he said to her:

10 "You have hurt me
deeply,
very deeply,
by keeping
all this
a secret."

11 So mahā-radiant Yudhiṣṭhira
placed a curse
on all womankind,
out of deep grief:
"From today no woman
will be able to keep a secret."

12 The heart of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
was burning
with memories of sons, grandsons,
relatives and friends.
His mind was pierced
with anguish.

13 Ātman discombobulated by grief,
mind aflame with pain,
wise rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
was like
a smoke-engulfed fire,
a victim of utter despair.

SECTION SEVEN

1 His thinking clouded by grief
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
constantly remembering
the mahā-chariot-hero Karṇa,
Dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
wallowed in sorrow.

2 Wracked by grief and pain,
heaving deep sighs
again and again,
in deep misery he said to Arjuna:

3 "We should have passed our days
as beggars
in Vṛṣṇi-land and Andhaka-land,
instead of exterminating our race,
and bringing this calamity
on our heads.

4 Our enemies are exulting.
The Kaurava dynasty,
the Kaurava race is destroyed.
We have committed suicide
by killing our kinsmen.
What kind of dharma is this?

5 *Dhik* on Kṣatriya chivalry!
On Kṣatriya strength!
Shame on Kṣatriya masculinity!
On Kṣatriya wrath!
What has it all led to
but disaster?

6 Precious only are the values
of forest-dwellers:
fortitude, self-control,
purity, detachment,
ahiṁsā, truth-speaking.
Only these are eternal.

7 Deluded, and greedy to gobble
the pleasures
of a kingdom,
proud and self-important,
we brought this calamity
upon ourselves.

8 We have killed our relatives
who wanted
to rule the earth.
We are now lords
of the three worlds.
But we are not happy.

9 We wanted to rule the earth,
and we killed those
who did not deserve to be killed.
Our friends and relatives are dead,
the pleasures of life
have become tasteless.

10 Like a pack of dogs yapping
over a chunk of meat,
we have squabbled and fought
for a kingdom.
A tasteless kingdom, to be discarded
like a chunk of meat.

11 Those whom we killed
    should not have been killed –
not for the whole world,
    not for heaps and heaps of gold,
not for the all the world's
    cattle and horses.

12 Filled with kāma-lust
    and anger
and passion and envy,
    death-driven,
they went to the abode
    of Vaivasvata-Yama.

13 So many men practise so much
    brahmacarya-discipline
and tapasyā and truth-speaking,
    and go through
so many hardships
    to beget meritorious sons.

14 So many women go through
    so many fasts
and yajñas and vows
    and auspicious rites
to cherish a foetus in their womb
    for ten months.

15 'Will it be an easy delivery?'
    'Will my baby
survive and prosper?'
    'Will it make us happy
in this world
    and the next?'

16 Poor mothers – they keep thinking
    of the fruits
of their labour.
    What fruits?
All wasted,
    all that labour –

17 We have killed every single one
of their sons,
young sons, ear-ringed sons –
none of them left
to enjoy the kingdom.
Instead, without paying their debt

18 To their parents,
to their *pitṛ*-ancestors
and to the gods,
they have gone
to the abode
of Vaivasvata-Yama.

19 Just when their fathers
and mothers
were expecting wealth and gems
from their sons,
their sons, kings all of them,
were exterminated.

20 Well, you cannot expect men
who are gripped
by kāma-lust and arrogance,
who revel in wrath,
to taste the fruits
of victory in battle.

21 The Pāñcālas and the Kauravas
who have perished,
and others who have not –
both are doomed
by their karma
to attain fearful realms.

22 The world holds us responsible
for the genocide
that has taken place,
but the real responsibility
lies with the sons
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

23 Duryodhana was the one
who was deceitful,
hostile and māyā-ridden;
he was the one
who lied and misbehaved
with us innocents.

24 Neither did we get what we wanted,
nor they.
We lost, they lost.
No earth for them,
no lovely girls singing songs
for them.

25 No advice from ministers
and friends,
no *śruti*-wisdom for them,
Not for them
the joys of glittering gems
and world-lordship.

26 Duryodhana burned with hatred –
no happiness for him.
He saw us prospering,
and he suffered,
his body wilted,
he became pale and weak.

27 Subala's son Śakuni
informed Dhṛtarāṣṭra about this.
Obsessively fond
of his son,
he unjustly kept
pampering him,

28 Totally ignoring the advice
of Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma and Vidura.
And so –
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
destroyed himself,
and he destroyed me.

29

Because he did not restrain
his immoral, avaricious,
kamā-afflicted son,
he ensured the doom
of his son's brothers also,
and tarnished his own royal glory.

30

As for Suyodhana-Duryodhana
see how
that hate-driven, evil-minded son
of Dhṛtarāṣṭra
has cast his father and mother
into flaming grief.

31

And the language he used
before Krishna
who had come to make peace –
which high-born person
could have spoken like that
to a well-wisher?

32

Through our own grievous fault,
with what ferocity
we worked out our own destruction,
like the flaming sun
burning with its energy itself
and everything around it.

33

The very personification
of hatred and hostility,
Duryodhana,
became our evil star of doom.
Ill-minded Duryodhana
sealed the fate of our dynasty.

34

We have killed many
who should not have been killed,
and earned the world's blame.
By installing
wicked, ill-motived,
family-ruining Duryodhana

35 As rājā of the kingdom,
Dhṛtarāṣṭra has brought grief
upon himself.
We were criminals.
We killed heroes.
We destroyed ourselves.

36 Yes, by killing our enemies
we have appeased our pride,
but grief grips us.
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
A crime is expiated
by doing good to others,

37 By sincere repentance,
by gifts of charity,
and by tapasyā,
by *nivṛtti*-anonymity,
pilgrimages, *śruti-smṛti* study,
and japa recitation.

38 *Śruti*-scriptures declare
that a *tyāgi* who renounces
the world cannot commit a crime;
śruti affirms
that such a person is freed
from birth and death.

39 O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna!
Such a person
attains the Supreme Brahman.
Such a person
is the learned muni who transcends
the world's ambivalence.

40 O scourge-of-foes Arjuna!
I am leaving you,
and going to the forest.
Śruti says clearly
the man who seeks worldly fulfilment
is not a man of dharma.

41 I see the truth of this clearly,
O foe-slaying Arjuna.
I have given myself up
to worldly things,
and in so doing
I have done great wrong,

42 I have made myself
vulnerable to birth and death.
Śruti is right.
I will throw away
kingdom and worldly pleasures,
and seek happiness

43 In true freedom, sorrow-less freedom,
ego-less freedom,
and go to the forest.
O Kaurava descendant!
Stay back,
and rule this thorn-free kingdom.

44 No such pleasures for me!
I am free!"
Yudhiṣṭhira said this,
and kept silent.
Pṛthā-Kuntī's youngest son
spoke up.

SECTION EIGHT

1 Like one unwilling to condone insult
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
finest-of-straight-speakers Arjuna
could not tolerate Yudhiṣṭhira,

2 And so Indra's fearsome son Arjuna,
mahā-radiant, smiled,
bit his lips, and bluntly said
these serious words to Yudhiṣṭhira:

3 “Aho! How terrible! How sad!
You so sad!
How strange that you should think
of giving up
after achieving so much
with such effort!

4 You have conquered the earth,
conquered it
with the strength of your sva-dharma.
What mistaken notion,
what weakness of will makes you
want to give it up?

5 Can a eunuch win a kingdom,
can an idler?
If this was your intention,
what roused you
to kill and get killed
so many earth-lords?

6 Whoever chooses to lead the life
of a beggar –
he loses son, wife, cattle-wealth,
he loses fame in the world;
he really is poor,
this poor man,
for nothing he does
gets him any glory whatsoever.

7 When you go round with a skull-pot
like a *kapālin*-beggar,
a despicable mendicant,
forsaking your kingdom,
leaving work half-done,
what will the world think of you?

8 *Prabhu*! Lord! Why are you so eager
to give up the good you can do,
and leave everything,
and become a faceless wandering beggar?

9

So, you have decided –
born in a family of rājās,
having conquered the world,
you will give up
dharma and artha,
and go and live in the forest.

10

So you go to the forest,
and in your absence
others will poorly perform
the rituals
you should have performed –
will not the blame be yours?

11

In his state of abject poverty,
Nahuṣa behaved
with extreme cruelty.
'Shame on poverty!' he said.
'Poverty is for munis,
not kings.'

12

You know only too well
living day to day
is only for ṛṣis
Wealth is the basis
of the dharma
of a king.

13

O rājā!
You steal a man's wealth,
you steal his dharma.
If my wealth is stolen,
who will I pardon,
and how?

14

People look askance
at a poor man,
as if he were a criminal.
Poverty is despicable.
Don't praise poverty
in front of me.

15 In this world, O rājā,
disgraced and poor
are both pitiable.
I see no difference
between the disgraced
and the poor.

16 Like so many rivers
streaming down the slope
of a mountain,
so much good
is possible
from amassed wealth.

17 O lord of men!
From artha comes dharma,
kāma and heaven.
Without money,
how will you manage
to survive?

18 Like streams drying up
in summer,
All the deeds
of a foolish
poverty-stricken man
become futile.

19 The moneyed man
is the man who has friends.
Relatives surround him.
Call that man man
who has money.
The moneyed man is the pāṇḍit.

20 It is very difficult
for a poor man
to get anything done.
Wealth breeds wealth,
like a herd of elephants
following a leader.

21

O lord of men!
    Everything revolves round wealth:
dharma, kāma,
    heaven, happiness,
śruti-scriptures,
    and punishment.

22

With wealth a family prospers,
    with wealth dharma flourishes.
Without it,
    no happiness here or hereafter,
O Puruṣottama,
    finest-of-men.

23

You cannot perform
    even deeds of dharma
without wealth.
    Like rivers streaming down
a mountain,
    dharma flows out of wealth.

24

The frail-bodied man, O rājā,
    is not weak.
Weak is the poor man,
    without cows,
without servants,
    without means to welcome guests.

25

Think clearly, O rājā. Take the case
    of the gods and anti-gods.
Born of the same father,
    yet the gods are known
to kill the antigods –
    for what if not for wealth?

26

If taking away another's wealth
    is not right,
how will a king ever be able
    to practise his dharma?
That at least is the verdict
    of those who have insight.

27 Don't they say: 'He should study
the three Vedas,
and seek to amass wealth,
and with that wealth
he should perform rituals
and sacrifices.'

28 The gods obtained heaven
through conflict
with family members.
If the antigods
are not related to the gods,
then what are they?

29 That is how the gods behave,
and that is
what the Vedas say.
Teaching and studying the Vedas,
performing yajñas
and getting them performed –

30 Only wealth makes that possible,
nothing else.
I have never seen
any wealth obtained
without in some way
exploiting others.

31 So the rājās go about conquering
others' lands
and saying, 'This is mine.'
Exactly what a son
says about the wealth
of his father.

32 The rāja-ṛṣis also,
who are now in heaven,
have the same view.
Like water-vapours of the ocean,
driven by winds,
spreading in all directions,

33 The wealth of royal families
spreads in all countries of this earth.
In turn,
one by one,
Dilīpa, Nṛga,
Nahuṣa,

34 Ambarīṣa and Māndhātā
ruled this earth,
which is now in your hands.
You must perform a lavish yajña
and distribute
profuse *dakṣiṇā*-gifts.

35 O rājā! Should you refuse
to perform it,
the kingdom's crimes
will fall on your head.
The rājās who perform *aśvamedhas*
with generous *dakṣiṇās*–

36 Their subjects are purified
merely by witnessing the yajña
and participating
in the *avabhṛtha*-bath.
Viśva-rūpa Mahādeva,
Universe-formed Śiva
once performed
a mahā-yajña
called the Sarva-medha
in which he offered
as oblation
all the *bhūta*-creatures
and also himself.

37 I have heard, O rājā,
the Daśaratha yajña
is the eternal mahā-path
to limitless rewards.
Perform it. Do not choose
a crooked path."

SECTION NINE

1 “Calm your mind,” said Yudhiṣṭhira,
“for a brief while,
single-pointedly go into yourself,
and you
will understand and appreciate
what I say.

2 I have decided to give up
coarse pleasures
and seek the purer happiness.
There is no way
I will accept
what you are suggesting.

3 What is this solitary auspicious path
that I intend to travel?
Ask me – and I will tell you.
Don’t ask – then listen anyway.

4 I will forsake coarse pleasures,
I will practise mahā-tapasyā.
I will live
on roots and fruits
in the forests.
I will be like the forest creatures.

5 I will light the sacred fire
at the right times,
I will eat less
and keep my body fit.
I will wear deerskin,
and keep my hair matted.

6 I will endure patiently
cold, heat, wind,
hunger, thirst, and toil.
I will practise tapasyā
as approved by tradition
to train my body.

7 I will delight in the language
of the birds and beasts
of the forest,
their insistent,
persistent calls
soothing my ears and my mind.

8 I will inhale the sweet scents
of flowers in full bloom,
and of creepers,
and watch with joy
the beautiful birds
and beasts.

9 And I will have a darshan
of *vanāprastha* world-renouncers
and other recluses.
I will not displease
any forest creature,
let alone a village-dweller.

10 Alone, and at peace with myself,
I will subsist
on ripe and unripe fruits,
and gratify gods and *pitṛs*
with fruits and water
and sacred chants.

11 And so I will live the forest life
as recommended
in the śāstras,
in every strict detail,
and wait for the time of release
from my body.

12 Or I will become
a shaven-headed muni,
and stand under trees
and ask them, one by one,
to drop me their fruits as alms
to feed my body.

13 My dust-smeared body
will find shelter
in lonely places,
or under large-rooted trees.
I will give up thinking
of pleasant and unpleasant.

14 No grief, no joy.
No praise, no blame.
No hope, no desire.
Free from life's ambivalence,
free from possessiveness,

15 Blissful in the ātman,
at peace in the ātman,
I will not converse
with anyone,
I will be like one
deaf and blind.

16 I will not harm
any of the four forms
of moving and unmoving life.
I will respect
the sva-dharmas of all people,
irrespective of differences.

17 I will not mock anyone,
I will not frown at anyone.
I will be
always cheerful,
I will keep my senses
under cntrol.

18 I will walk my own road,
not ask directions
from anyone I meet.
I will have
no special direction,
no specific destination.

[XII:9:19-24]

Transcreated by P. Lal

19

No special place to go,
no looking forward,
no turning back.
Revering all life,
moving and unmoving,
I shall keep on going.

20

I will follow my nature.
Food and water
will come when they come.
I will not quarrel
with life's opposites, dualities,
and contradictions.

21

I will be happy getting as alms
even a tasteless morsel.
If I get it, fine;
if not, fine.
If one house does not give it,
I will try seven.

22

When the kitchen fire is put out,
the husking rod put aside,
meal-time is over,
utensils removed,
and mendicants have departed
after receiving their alms,

23

Then will I go
on my begging round,
to one, or three, or five homes.
Severing all sentimental bonds,
I shall travel
all over the world.

24

Gaining or losing,
I will be calm
in my mahā-tapasyā.
Calm to the person
who loves life, calm to him
who desires death.

25

The living will not delight me,
and the dead
will not grieve me.
If one man cuts my arm,
and another anoints
it with sandalpaste,

26

I will not think ill
of the first,
nor good of the other.
Giving up all work
that leads to material gain,
my only work
will be eating and drinking,
and opening and closing my eyes.

27

I will remain detached,
I will control my senses,
I will empty myself of desire,
I will cleanse my ātman of all imperfection.

28

Freed of longing, freed of attachment,
freed of dependence,
I will be free, free at last,
free like the wind,
like the world-mothering,
everywhere-flowing Mātariśvan.

29

And so, my passions stilled,
I will experience the peace
of eternal self-realisation.
I did not know.
Desire obsessed me.
I committed mahā-crimes.

30

There are many involved
in doing right and wrong
for the sake of looking after
wives and children and relatives –
all caught up
in cause and effect.

31

And then they grow old,
age catches up,
prāṇa-breath deserts the body,
and they pay
for their ill deeds,
tasting the fruits of karma.

32

Like a chariot-wheel stuck
in the revolving whirl
of saṁsāra-cakra birth-and-rebirth,
they are placed
by their karma
to interact with their fellow-beings.

33

Birth, death, old age, disease,
and suffering –
such is the whirlpool of saṁsāra.
Happy is he
who gives up
this worthless world.

34

Even gods fall from heaven,
even mahā-ṛṣis
lose their eminence.
What is wrong with a man
who knows cause-and-effect
giving up this world?

35

An earth-lord enormously renowned
for any number
of wonderful achievements
gets slaughtered
for the most trivial reason
by another earth-lord.

36

At last I have realised
this immortal nectar of wisdom,
this *prajñāmṛta.*
I have chosen
that the path leads to undecaying, eternal,
unshakable felicity.

37 I am a fearless traveller
on this path
of the wise.
I will not
be a victim of birth and death,
and old age and disease,
and suffering.
I will go beyond
the travails of the body."

SECTION TEN

1 "O rājā!" exclaimed Bhīma.
"You are like
a stupid Brahmin parroter
of sacred texts
whose mind is dulled
by rubbishy repetition.
You are lacking in insight
into what is truth.

2 O bull-brave Bharata!
What have you gained
by destroying Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons
if you intended all along
to mock rāja-dharma
and live an easy life?

3 In the heart of a Kṣatriya,
there is no room
for pardon, pity, compassion
and non-cruelty
even for his own brother.
Why are you different?

4 Had we known in advance
this is what
was going on in your mind,
we would never
have used our weapons
to fight and kill.

5 We would have gone begging
like you
till our suffering bodies
collapsed and died.
And this gruesome war
would never have taken place.

6 I have heard wise men say:
Everything is food
for the breath of life.
The *prāṇa*-breath
dines on everything,
whether moving or unmoving.

7 I have heard wise men say:
If anyone opposes
your sovereignty,
or tries to snatch it,
it is the dharma of a Kṣatriya
to kill him.

8 Yuḍhiṣṭhira! Our opponents
were also criminals.
So we killed them.
It is dharma
now to enjoy the world
we have won.

9 What are you doing?
You are like a man
who, digging a well,
stops before he strikes water,
and leaves midway,
covered with mud and slush.

10 Or like a man
who clambers up a tree,
looking for honey,
but before he can taste it,
topples, and falls,
and dies.

11 Or like a man
    on a mahā-mission
who sets out hopefully
    and accomplishes the mission
and, mission accomplished,
    returns in despair.

12 O delighter of the Kauravas!
    O Kuru-nandana!
Or like a man
    who kills his enemies,
and, having killed his enemies,
    commits suicide.

13 Or like a famished man
    who is given food,
but will not eat;
    or a lustful man
given a lusty girl,
    but will not enjoy her.

14 O Bharata rājā!
    It's really we
who are to blame, we four,
    for mistaking a dimwit
for an elder brother,
    and following him.

15 Muscular-armed are we,
    weapons-experts are we,
clear-thinking are we –
    and like hapless do-nothings
we obeyed the commands
    of a eunuch brother!

16 We helped the helpless;
    now we are hopeless!
Will not the people we helped
    say we are useless?
Think! What I have said –
    is it pointless?

17

We were taught
that *saṁnyāsa*-renunciation
should be practised
in extreme crisis,
in doddering old age,
or when routed by enemies.

18

We were never taught
to take *saṁnyāsa* like this!
On the contrary –
those with subtle insight say
saṁnyāsa at a time like this
goes against dharma.

19

How can a born Kṣatriya,
a convinced Kṣatriya,
go against Kṣatriya values?
If he does, then blame the Creator
who made warring
the duty of a Kṣatriya.

20

Only the infamous,
destitute and atheists
twist the words of the Vedas
to mean
that Kṣatriyas can also
take up *saṁnyāsa*.

21

You don't fulfil yourself,
you destroy yourself
if, using dharma as an excuse,
you beg for food,
posing as a recluse
vowed to silent supplication.

22

Eligible for *saṁnyāsa*
is he who cannot provide
for sons and grandsons,
cannot gratify gods and *pitṛs*,
and does not have the means
even to welcome a guest.

23 Deer and boars and birds
don't go to heaven
by living in a forest.
Merit is obtained differently.
What good
is living in a forest?

24 If a rājā can find fulfilment
by taking *saṁnyāsa,*
why, so can mountains,
and so can trees
find such fulfilment –
and very quickly too!

25 Look at them!
They are the perfect *saṁnyāsīs.*
They harm no one.
They keep aloof
from worldly seductions.
They are total *brahmacārīs.*

26 Another's karma
is not going to make
your life successful.
Only *your* karma.
To refrain from karma
is to invite ruin.

27 If looking after one's fulfilment
is all that matters,
water-creatures are very fulfilled.
Karma is your duty.
No karma,
no fulfilment."

SECTION ELEVEN

1 In this connection, O bull-brave Bharata
(continued Arjuna), people speak
of an old story about a conversation between
some tapasyā-practisers and Śakra-Indra.

2 It so happened once that some Brahmin youths,
so young they did not have even face-hair,
decided to leave home
and go and live in the forest.

3 Well-to-do all of them,
but they thought
what they were doing was dharma;
leaving father and mother,
they began practising brahmacarya.
Indra took pity on them.

4 *Bhagavan* Indra came in the form
of a golden bird
and said: "Only those who eat
a yajña's remnants
can do very difficult work
that ordinary men cannot.

5 Such work brings great merit.
Praise be to those
who can do it,
for they are the real men of dharma,
they are the ones who attain
the highest goal."

6 "Aho!" exclaimed the young ṛṣis.
"This bird is singing
the praises of the eaters
of yajña-remnants.
He must be praising us,
for we do just that."

7 "Fools!" replied the bird.
"I am not praising
dust-smeared defiled-food eaters
like you.
The eaters of yajña-remnants
are very different."

8 "Look, bird," said the ṛṣis,
"we were convinced
the road we took was the best.
Tell us
what you think is the best.
We have great *śraddhā*-respect for you."

9 "Between speaker and listener,"
said the bird,
"is a big gulf.
However, if you are not cynical,
I will tell you
what is good for you."

10 "*Tāta!* Dear friend!" said the ṛṣis.
"We will listen.
You know all the paths.
O dharmātmā!
We will respect what you say.
Advise us."

11 "Finest among the four-footed,"
said the bird,
"is the cow, finest among minerals is gold,
finest among words the mantra,
finest among the two-footed
the Brahmin.

12 Mantras dominate a Brahmin's
birth-sacrament and other rituals,
all through life,
at all times,
till the very end
at the funeral pyre.

13 Vedic rites are his supreme road
to the realm of heaven.
In fact,
it is believed
that mantras alone complete
every sacred ceremony.

14 A person attains whatever deity
his ātman prefers to adore.
Months, half-months,
the seasons,
the sun, the moon,
the stars –

15 They are all propitiated
by human beings
with appropriate rituals.
The mahā-āshram is any home
where these merit-making rites
are performed.

16 Anyone who condemns
these rites and ceremonies
and follows a mistaken path,
is a fool;
he is the person
who is wasting his life.

17 The glory of the gods,
the glory of *pitṛ*-ancestors,
the glory of Brahman –
these are eternal.
Only fools who hate the Vedas
reject these.

18 For has not a ṛṣi declared,
'Perform these yajñas with tapasyā,
with lavish gift-offerings,
and get your heart's desire'?
This then is the meaning of tapasyā
for most men.

19 Very difficult indeed is to follow
the guru's advice –
to propitiate the eternal glory
of the gods,
the eternal glory of *pitṛs*,
the eternal glory of Brahman.

20 With such propitiatory performance,
the gods themselves
became glorious.
So can even the the common householder.
I am asking you to follow
this difficult path.

21 Nothing excels tapasyā.
It is the root
of life itself.
And the householder's life
is the best place
to practise tapasyā.

22 The twice-born who are not jealous,
and free from the play
of life's opposites,
say this is the true tapasyā.
Popularly, even vow-keeping
is said to be tapasyā.

23 Those who dutifully,
morning and evening,
feed and eat with their family
attain the supreme realm
which is very difficult
to attain by others.

24 The man who feeds guests,
gods, *pitṛs,* relatives,
and then his family members,
and then eats,
is a *vighaśasin,*
the one who eats the remnants.'

25 He is the perfect performer
of his sva-dharma,
the supreme vow-keeper,
the truth-speaker,
he is the above-all-suspicion
guru of this world.

26 Free from envy and jealousy,
free from pride,
he performs the difficult deed,
he attains the heaven of Śakra-Indra,
and dwells there
for countless years."

27 The boys heard these words
full of dharma
(said Arjuna), and said,
"Renunciation we renounce.
We will lead the life
of a householder."

28 O all-knowing finest of men!
Control yourself,
be firm of mind, always,
and accept the responsibility
of ruling this earth,
now freed of your enemies.

SECTION TWELVE

1 Listening to Arjuna's account
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Nakula looked at Yudhiṣṭhira,
the finest of all rājās
excelling in dharma,
and spoke to him.

2 O foe-crushing Janamejaya!
A mahā-muscled hero,
Nakula was also mahā-wise,
and a gentle speaker.
He knew his brother's heart
and said to him:

3 "Mahārāja! The gods themselves built
structures for sacred fires
in Viśākha-yūpa, to obtain the fruits
of yajña-rituals. This you know.

4 O lord of the earth!
The Creator-father
who infuses *prāṇa*-life-breath
in all creatures,
even disbelievers, also engages
in Veda-inspired activity.

5 Those who flout the Vedas
are indeed the atheists.
He may indulge
in whatever activity he likes,
but if he flouts the words of the Vedas,
that Brahmin,

6 O Bharata descendant,
will never be able
to set foot in the realm of the gods.
The Vedas recommend
the householder's way
as the best of all.

7 O lord of men!
The wise who know *śruti*
and have experienced Brahman say this.
Respect them.
Who utilises wealth acquired by dharma
in performance of yajñas,

8 And does so, mahārāja,
with a completely
disciplined ātman,
he is said to be
the real *tyāgi*,
the true renouncer.

9 Mahārāja!
The deluded renouncer
is he who, without experiencing
the joys of the householder,
hastily enters into ātman-tyāga,
total self-renunciation.

10 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The renouncer who leaves home,
and roams about, sleeping quietly under a tree,
practises yoga,
and does not cook for himself,
is known as a *bhikṣuka,* a mendicant.

11 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
A Brahmin
who overcomes anger, delight,
and specially deceit,
and studies in depth the Vedas –
he is the renouncer.

12 O rājā! It is said,
once the very learned
weighed the four āśramas on a scale –
on one side, three,
and on the other,
the householder.

13 O descendant of Bharata!
Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The householder tipped the scale –
it provided both kāma and heaven –
perfect for mahā-ṛṣis
and practical folk.

14 O bull-brave Bharata!
Who realises this,
he is the true renouncer.
The fool who leaves home
and goes to live in the forest
is not the true renouncer.

15 The so-called renouncer who uses dharma
as an excuse
and dreams of kāma in the forest
will find himself
strangled with a noose
by the rājā of death.

16 Work that is prompted
by the ego
is utterly fruitless.
Mahārāja!
Renunciation-prompted work
is mahā-fruitful.

17 The work of the ṛṣi always
is to cultivate
the following virtues:
calmness, self-control, truth, purity,
simplicity, sacrifice, perseverance,
and dharma.

18 The householder's life is praised
because it provides
for gods, *pitṛs* and guests.
Only it fulfils, mahārāja,
the three-fold ideal
of dharma, artha and kāma.

19 Such a renouncing householder
who devotedly adheres
to the ordained requirements
never faces failure –
he does not fail in this life,
nor in the next.

20 Free-from-all-imperfection
Dharmātmā Prajāpati-Brahmā
created the worlds with this ideal,
saying:
'Worship me with yajñas performed
with copious *dakṣiṇās*.'

21 With this ideal in mind,
he also created
the multiplicity of life
for oblation purposes:
creepers, trees, plants, animals
and other yajña necessities.

22 The householder performing yajñas
is involved
in complex and arduous details,
which is why
the householder's way
can be so difficult and frustrating.

23 If, despite being blessed
with cattle and wealth,
a householder will not perform yajñas,
then, mahārāja,
he is doomed to suffer
eternal misery.

24 For some ṛṣis, yajña means *svādhyāya,*
self-study of the Vedas,
for others
it is sacrifice of knowledge,
for still others the mahā-sacrifice
of pure contemplation.

25 Even the heaven-dwelling gods
thirst to see
a *dvija*-noble-born who,
taking the path
of single-minded *samādhi,*
becomes one with Brahman.

26 You are babbling like an atheist
if you refuse
to utilise in yajñas
all the gems
and other varied wealth
that you have won.

27 O lord of men!
No one with family responsibility
thinks of renunciation.
Focus your mind instead
on the Rājasūya, Aśvamedha
and Sarvamedha yajñas.

28 O ruler of the earth!
Think also of performing other yajñas,
as Śakra-Indra did,
recommended by Brahmins.

29 A rājā whose neglect leads
to robbers plundering his kingdom
is not a protecting rājā
but infamous Kali-yuga incarnate.

30 Horses, cows, maids,
caparisoned she-elephants,
villages, provinces,
fields and houses –

31 If, despite being princes, O rājā,
we do not gift these to Brahmins
out of pride, we will be considered
as rājās of Kali-yuga.

32 Rājās who refuse charity,
who deny refuge to the shelterless,
are criminally responsible.
Only blame for them; no happiness.

33 *Prabhu*! Lord! If, instead of providing facilities
for mahā-yajñas, *śrāddha* for *pitṛs*,
and going on *tīrtha*-pilgrimages,
you abdicate your responsibilities,

34 You will be scattered like clouds in a storm.
This world and the other world
will be denied to you.
You will hang in mid-space.

35 Escaping from whatever in the mind
or outside the mind traps the mind,
is not renunciation.
Just leaving home is not renunciation.

36 A Brahmin, who abides by all
that is ordained by tradition
for the householder, never, mahārāja,
experiences decline in prosperity.

37 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Why should that earth-lord grieve
who has routed
powerful enemies
and won their kingdom,
like Śakra-Indra decimating
the Daitya antigods,
and who is firm in his sva-dharma?

38 O Indra-among-men Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Cherishing Kṣatriya-dharma,
conquering the world, and getting yajñas
performed by mantra-knowing Brahmins,
with liberal gifts, you will attain
more than heaven. Give up grief!"

SECTION THIRTEEN

1 O descendant of Bharata!
(said Sahadeva)
Renouncing things often does not work,
nor does renouncing thoughts.

2 Let our enemies enjoy whatever
dharma and happiness
comes from the renunciation
of external objects.

3 Let our friends and well-wishers
enjoy whatever dharma and happiness
comes to world-rulers
who govern their kingdoms selflessly.

4 Two syllables "*mama*" (me-me) mean death.
Three syllables "*na mama*" (not me-me)
mean non-death – eternal *amṛta* ambrosia.

5 O rājā! It goes without saying
that these two –
death and non-death-Brahman –
existing invisibly in everyone,
propel all creatures
into discord and strife.

6 O descendant of Bharata!
If, indeed,
this *sattva*-essence in us
is imperishable,
then killing his body
does not really kill a person.

7 On the other hand,
if killing the body
means killing the life-essence also,
then what is the point
of all these Vedic rituals
and ceremonies?

8 The best course is to follow,
for intelligent people at least,
the path of heritage and tradition
recommended by our ancient eminences.

9 If you feel that a householder's way
does not go with a royal life-style,
why do you think Svayambhu Self-Born Manu
and emperors have recommended it?

10 O descendant of Bharata!
Those kings enjoyed
all the pleasures of this earth
during the guṇa-laden Kṛta and other yugas.

11 Futile is the life of a king who,
though lord of this earth's
moving and unmoving life,
refrains from enjoying it righteously.

12 On the other hand, O rājā,
a perfect prey for death
is the forest-dwelling renouncer
whose mind is on worldly matters.

13 Think carefully, O Bharata descendant!
Our Brahman-nature is very different
from our secret longings. Only the seer
of his true nature escapes the fear of death.

14 You are my father, my mother,
my brother, my guru. In my grief,
I have used harsh words with you.
I beg your pardon. Be kind to me.

15 O incomparable Bharata lord of the world!
Whatever I said, right or wrong,
I said out of deep bhakti for you.
Please remember this, is all I ask.

SECTION FOURTEEN

1 The brothers tried their best
(contined Vaiśampāyana),
using a variety of arguments
from the Vedas
to convince Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
but he remained unmoved.

2 Draupadī of mahā-noble birth,
illustrious Draupadī,
large-eyed lady,
among women the finest,
said her say
to Indra-among-rājās Yudhiṣṭhira,

3 Who was sitting with his brothers,
like a leader of a herd of elephants
surrounded by so many
powerful lions and tigers.

4 That *abhimānavatī* lady
thought highly of herself,
specially in relation to Yudhiṣṭhira
who respected her
as a dharma-*darśinī*,
with deep knowledge of dharma.

5 Which is why the large-hipped
and lovely-thighed lady,
after hearing the brothers
severely criticising him,
spoke these sweet, soothing words
to her husband:

6 "Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Your brothers like *stokaka*-birds
have cried themselves hoarse
in front of you – and yet,
not a single word of appreciation
from you!

7 Like musth mahā-elephants
they have followed you
everywhere you went,
braving fire and sorrow.
Have the goodness to please them
a little at least.

8 Remember, O rājā,
in the Dvaitavana forest,
when your brothers endured with you
bitter cold
and heat and wind,
and you said to them:

9 'We have made up our minds to win!
Together
we will kill Duryodhana
on the battlefield,
together we will enjoy
the spoils of war.

10 O my foe-crushing brothers!
When you unchariot
all those chariot-heroes,
and kill the war-elephants,
and litter the battlefield
with enemy corpses,

11 And celebrate the victory
with yajñas
and distribute lavish *dakṣiṇās,*
then the pain
of our forest-exile
will turn into joy.'

12 O finest of dharma-knowers!
Such brave words
you said to us then!
What is the reason
you are so adamant now
to disappoint us?

13 This world is not enjoyed
by eunuchs or cowards.
Nor is wealth. Fish don't spawn
in filthy waters.
Children are not born
to eunuchs.

14 O descendant of Bharata!
Inglorious is the Kṣatriya
who won't punish;
the world is not his to enjoy.
Unhappy the subjects of a rājā
who will not punish.

15 O finest of rājās!
Friendship with all,
giving up, study, tapasyā –
these are the dharma
of a Brahmin,
not a rājā.

16 The essential dharma of a rājā
is the punishment
of evil-doers,
the protection of the law-abiding,
and never retreating
on the battlefield.

17 The real knower of dharma combines
pardon and punishment,
giving and taking,
fear and fearlessness,
justice and mercy,
as and when required.

18 You have not won this earth
by *śruti*-study,
or as a gift,
or by persuasion,
or by yajñas,
or by begging.

19 A massive army of elephants,
horses and chariots,
and heroes armed
with the triple strength
of good leader, good counsel
and personal courage,

20 Protected by Droṇa, Karṇa,
Aśvatthāman and Kṛpa –
that was the army you destroyed.
You conquered the earth.
It is now yours
to enjoy the earth.

21 *Prabhu*! Lord! Mahārāja!
O tiger-brave hero!
You have completely crushed
the territory
known as Jambudvīpa
and all its districts.

22 O lord of men!
Completely crushed also
with the rod of power
is Krauñca-dvīpa,
which lies to the West
of Mahā-meru.

23 You have in addition,
O lord of men,
completely crushed
with the rod of power
Krauñca-dvīpa's equal, Śāka-dvīpa,
in the east of Mahā-meru.

24 O tiger-among-men!
To the north of Mahā-meru,
lies Bhadrāśva,
the equal of Śāka-dvīpa;
this too you have crushed
with the rod of power.

25 These apart, you have crushed
with the rod of power,
O valiant hero,
many islands in the far ocean
that were protected
by powerful kingdoms.

26 O Bharata mahārāja!
These conquests
have earned you the pūjā-praise
of the twice-born,
but you do not seem
to be pleased.

27 They are containers-of-foes,
crushers-of-foes,
like the very gods, your brothers –
any one of them,
I think, is perfectly equipped
to make me happy.

28 O tiger-brave hero!
    Why can't the five
of you bull-brave husbands
    make me happy,
like the five senses making
    the body happy?

29 O descendant of Bharata!
    Your brothers –
they are bull-powerful,
    elephant-strong.
Give them the recognition
    they deserve.

30 My all-wise,
    all-understanding mother-in-law,
who never speaks an untruth,
    said to me: 'Pāñcālī-Draupadī,
Yudhiṣṭhira will make you
    supremely happy.

31 He will show his prowess
    and kill
hundreds of rājās.'
    O ruler of men!
She was wrong.
    You are overcome by folly.

32 If madness grips the eldest,
    what can you expect
from the younger brothers?
    Mahārāja!
Your madness
    has made them mad too.

33 O ruler of men!
    They must be mad.
They should have put you in prison
    with atheists,
and taken over the rule
    of the kingdom.

34 Any fool who behaves like this
is doomed to failure.
He needs to be treated
with incense,
with collyrium, nasal drops
and other drugs.

35 Hopefully such treatment
will restore him
to his senses. And I,
O excellent Bharata,
I am the worst
of all women,

36 For I am still alive,
and my sons
are all dead.
Everyone here
has been trying in vain
to persuade you. Truly,

37 I think by renouncing
the world,
you are harming yourself.
O incomparable rājā!
Like the two
world-renowned rājās,

38 Māndhātā and Ambarīṣa,
you too, O rājā,
should shine in glory.
Rule the Earth-devī
and her people with dharma,

39 Rule her hills and forests
and islands.
O rājā! O incomparable king!
Perform many yajñas,
fight your enemies,
distribute wealth and vesture
and other gifts to the twice-born."

SECTION FIFTEEN

1 Yajña-born Yājñasenī-Draupadī's words,
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
prompted Arjuna respectfully to say
to his mahā-muscled famous elder brother:

2 "The rod of punishment is the rod of justice
that protects everyone.
When everyone sleeps, this rod keeps awake.
The wise say this rod is dharma itself.

3 O lord of men!
This rod of justice
protects dharma and artha and kāma,
which is why
it is said to be
the three-in-one ideal.

4 Good harvests, and material wealth,
depend on it.
Keeping that in mind, O learned one,
you should attend
to the welfare
of the world.

5 Many, fearing royal punishment,
stay away from crime.
Others because they fear Yama,
god of death;
and still others,
for fear of the after-life.

6 Others because they fear
what others will say.
This is the way
the world is.
This is why the rod of justice
is so essential.

7

Take away the rod of punishment,
and many
would even become cannibals.
Without the protection of justice,
people would fall
into the lowest of hells.

8

It is described as a rod
by the learned
because it restrains
the hard-to-restrain
and punishes
the criminally wicked.

9

Punish a Brahmin with words,
a Kṣatriya
with subsistence penalty,
a Vaiśya with fines,
a Śūdra with nothing –
he's already punished.

10

O lord of the world!
Punishment is a system
accepted by society
to protect wealth
and restrain the erring
and the stupid.

11

Where a grimly black
and wrathful red-eyed leader
is always alert
to apprehend offenders,
the subjects also
abide by the law.

12

The brahmacārī, the householder,
the forest recluse
and the *bhikṣuka* mendicant –
are what they are
because they also fear
the rod of justice.

13 Who would perform yajñas,
O rājā,
without fear of punishment?
Or give in charity?
Or do what is expected?
Or keep a promise?

14 Without hurting or exploiting,
without strenuous work,
you cannot become rich.
If a fisherman
wants a large catch of fish,
he has to kill them.

15 Without killing,
no man achieves fame,
acquires wealth or subjects.
Indra became
mahā-Indra
by slaying Vṛtra.

16 Look at the slaughtering gods
who are adored
by awe-struck humans:
Rudra-Śiva, Skanda-Kārtikeya,
Śakra-Indra, Varuṇa,
and Yama.

17 O descendant of Bharata!
All killers:
Kāla, Vāyu, Mṛtyu,
Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera,
Ravi-Sūrya, the Vasus, Maruts,
Sādhyas, Viśvadevas.

18 These are the ones whose prowess
impresses people
to bow their heads in worship.
Who cares
to worship Brahmā or Dhātā
or Pūṣan?

19 Why should they?
These gods are sense-controlled,
peaceful, even-minded deities.
Only serene-minded humans
worship in every way
these nonviolent gods.

20 I cannot see anyone
in this world
who practises ahiṁsā.
The truth is:
The strong always
feed upon the weak.

21 The mongoose, O rājā,
devours the mouse;
the cat gobbles
the mongoose,
the dog devours the cat,
the leopard chews the dog.

22 And man devours them all!
And look!
Here comes Cosmic Time Kāla!
All the moving and unmoving life
of the world
is food for him!

23 This is the dispensation
of the gods.
It does not distress the learned.
O Indra-among-rājās!
You were made this way.
Be what you are.

24 Fools are they who give up
anger and joy
and take refuge in the forest.
Do all the tapasyā you like –
you cannot survive
without taking life.

25 There's life pulsating
in water, in soil,
in fruits.
Where is the man
who can say
he does not take life?

26 There are subtle forms of life,
so infinitesimal
you can only infer their existence.
The blink of an eyelid
can break the back
of such a life-form.

27 Casting off anger and envy,
many munis leave villages
and go to the forest.
Poor deluded creatures –
in the forest you see them
trapped in family-dharma.

28 There are others
busily tilling the soil,
uprooting plants and trees,
killing birds and beasts,
and performing yajñas
in order to obtain heaven.

29 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
I firmly believe
that human beings are rewarded
with success
only when the rod of punishment
administers justice.

30 If that rod is not wielded,
mankind is ruined.
What will happen is simple:
Like big fish devouring small fish,
the strong
will devour the weak.

31

For Brahmā spoke the truth:
Punishment protects people.
A flickering flame,
when blown into hard,
in fear starts blazing
in bright incandescence.

32

If there was no way
of telling
good from bad,
the world would get lost
in a welter of confused, dark,
indiscriminate activity.

33

Even the scoffers of tradition,
the atheists,
the despisers of the Vedas,
come to their senses
when they are confronted
with the rod of punishment.

34

A straight man is hard to find.
Punishment helps
to show the straight path.
Excellent is fear
as a means of keeping alive
a noble tradition.

35

Punishment was the way
by which the Creator
planned for the prosperity
of the four castes
and the preservation and protection
of dharma-and-artha.

36

If there were no fear of punishment,
wild animals
would have devoured birds
and human beings,
and despoiled yajñas
by eating the sacred oblations.

37 If there were no fear of punishment,
brahmacārīs would not study
the Vedas,
cows would refuse to be milked,
and young girls refuse
to be given in marriage.

38 Without the security and protection
provided by punishment,
the people of the world
would be so confused
no one would know
which things were his, and which not.

39 If there were no fear of punishment,
would anyone
ever respect tradition
and perform annual yajñas
which are occasions for distribution
of lavish *dakṣiṇās*?

40 If there were no fear of punishment,
would anyone
practise dharma in an āshram,
would anyone
even be interested in the pursuit
of knowledge?

41 If there were no fear of punishment,
would camels
oxen, horses, mules
and asses
ever pull the vehicles
to which we yoke them?

42 If there were no fear of punishment,
would servants
obey their masters,
would children obey their parents,
would a young girl abide
by her virgin-dharma?

43 Those who know,
say that fear of punishment
keeps subjects in control.
This world –
and heaven too –
is based on punishment.

44 You will never see deceit,
and wickedness,
and treachery in any land
where punishment
is wisely
and justly administered.

45 If there were no fear of punishment,
would not dogs
freely lick
the sacrificial oblation of ghee,
and crows fly off
with the *puroḍāśa*-offerings?

46 You won this kingdom by dharma
or adharma –
how does that matter?
Why this grief?
It is yours to enjoy.
Enjoy it! Perform the yajña!

47 Lucky are the rich,
who dress in fine robes,
and happily practise dharma,
and enjoy
delicious food,
and donate fruits and wealth.

48 It goes without saying:
Everything depends on wealth.
And wealth depends
on punishment.
Glory be to the idea
of punishment!

49 Dharma is there to help
the world prosper.
Ahiṁsā is fine,
but punishment of the wicked
for the sake of dharma
is essential.

50 Nothing in this world
is absolutely perfect,
nothing absolutely imperfect.
There is good and bad
in everything.
We must discriminate.

51 Animals are castrated,
their horns cut off;
they are punished,
they are tethered and yoked,
and forced to carry
heavy loads.

52 In a world riddled with deceit
and exploitation,
you, mahārāja,
should serve the cause
of our ancient dharma
by punishing justly.

53 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Perform yajñas,
protect your subjects,
and uphold dharma.
Crush your enemies,
and cherish your friends.

54 Don't let scruples prevent you
from slaying enemies.
O lord of the earth!
O Bharata descendant!
No fault attaches to a person
who gets rid of his enemies.

55 The crime of abortion does not attach
to a person
who kills an armed assailant,
because the anger of the assailant
provokes the victim
to angrily retaliate.

56 It goes without saying that the ātman
in all creatures
cannot be killed.
If the ātman cannot be killed,
then how can anyone
really kill anyone?

57 You live in a house,
and you move
from one room to another.
The individual jīva-ātman
leaves one body
and moves into another.

58 What those
who have insight
into truth
call death
is just that –
it is the leaving
of an old body
and moving
into a new one.

SECTION SIXTEEN

1 After Arjuna had finished
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
exceedingly impulsive
and powerful Bhīma,
summoning all his patience,
said to his eldest brother:

2 "You know all about dharma,
O rājā.
Nothing is unknown to you.
We have always been
at the receiving end of your wisdom.
We can teach you nothing.

3 O lord of men! I say to myself,
'I won't speak out. No, I won't.'
But now I am deeply troubled.
You must listen to me.

4 Everything has become muddled
because you are confused.
As a result,
all of us
have become cowards
and weaklings.

5 You are this world's rājā,
you are expert
in all the śāstras.
Why this confusion?
Why are you behaving
like a coward?

6 *Prabhu*! Lord!
You know the whats and what-nots
of this world.
You know
all about the past
and the future.

7 O ruler of men! Mahārāja!
That being so,
permit me to say something
about why
you must assert your kingship.
Please listen carefully.

[XII:16:8-13]

Transcreated by P. Lal

8 Two diseases afflict mankind:
physical and mental.
They are interconnected.
One depends on the other.
You cannot have one
without the other.

9 Certainly, mental ailments
spring from physical problems.
And it's also true
that physical problems
can be caused
by mental ailments.

10 The man who keeps brooding
on past physical
and mental sorrow,
goes from one pain to another.
He suffers doubly,
and uselessly.

11 Cold-phlegm, heat-bile, and wind –
these guṇa-qualities
are of the body, physical.
When these three
are perfectly balanced,
you are healthy.

12 If any one of these three
becomes excessive,
the remedy is simple:
excess cold is controlled by heat,
and excess heat
by cold.

13 Sattva-rajas-tamas are the guṇas
of the mind:
goodness-passion-darkness.
When these three
are perfectly balanced,
the mind is healthy.

14 If any one of these three
becomes excessive,
the remedy is simple:
sattva-joy removes rajas-grief,
and rajas-grief
removes sattva-joy.

15 You see people who are happy
busily recalling past sorrows,
and you see people
who are sad
busily remembering
their past joys.

16 You were never sad in grief,
nor glad in joy.
You rose above recalling
sadness in joy,
above recalling
happiness in grief.

17 O Kaurava descendant!
See how all-powerful is fate!
O Earth-lord!
What else can it be,
since you have risen above
recalling past sorrow?

18 How wonderful it is
that you cannot recall
the insult to Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
in the sabhā, in her period,
in a single dress,
in front of her Pāṇḍava husbands.

19 You were ordered out of the capital,
you were compelled
to wear deerskin,
forced into exile in mahā-forests.
How wonderful that you cannot recall
any of this!

20 Your painful encounter
with the antigod Jaṭa,
the clash with Citrasena,
Saindhava-Jayadratha's insulting behaviour –
how wonderful
you don't remember anything!

21 And tell me – how is it
that you cannot remember,
in your period of disguise,
Kīcaka kicking Draupadī,
a rājā's daughter,
in front of your eyes?

22 We are very strong, O rājā!
We routed even the gods,
and yet we were
pathetic menials
in the capital of Virāṭa,
do you remember?

23 O tormentor of foes!
A battle like the one you fought
with Droṇa and Bhīṣma
is facing you now –
but this battlefield
is inside your mind.

24 No arrows here to help you,
no allies,
no friends.
A lonely battle, this,
but one
you have to fight.

25 If you lose this battle,
and surrender your life-breath,
and perish,
you will be born again,
and will have to fight
the same enemy – yourself.

26 O bull-brave Bharata!
Fight this battle in your mind
with your invisible enemy –
and win!
Fight you must –
this is your sva-karma.

27 And if you fail, mahārāja,
to win this battle,
your plight will be terrible.
And if you win,
you will have won
literally everything.

28 Concentrate your mind
on the way of the world,
remember your revered ancestors
and their ideals,
and take on the task
of ruling your kingdom.

29 Fortunate are we that Duryodhana
and his followers are dead,
and so is Duḥśāsana;
Draupadī has re-tied
her dishevelled hair,
and you have won the war.

30 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
With appropriate *dakṣiṇās,*
perform the Aśvamedha-yajña.
We are all of us
at your service,
including valiant Vāsudeva-Krishna."

[XII:17:1-6]

Transcreated by P. Lal

SECTION SEVENTEEN

1 Discontentment, carelessness, vanity,
(replied Yudhiṣṭhira),
passion, lack of serenity,
power, delusion,
abhimān-self-importance,
and restlessness –

2 Attachment to these defects
is what makes you desire kingship
so much.
Free yourself from this,
and find the true joy
of inner peace.

3 You may be lord of the whole world,
but all you have is one stomach.
So what is it that makes you extol so fulsomely
the value of kingship?

4 Desire, O bull-brave Bharata,
cannot be quenched
in a day or a month.
Desire is insatiable –
a whole lifetime
will not satisfy it.

5 The more you feed a fire with fuel,
the more it blazes.
Without fuel,
it dies down by itself.
Hunger is best curbed
by careful dieting.

6 The unwise man thinks first
of his stomach
and how to glut it.
Conquer first your stomach;
then conquer the earth,
and enjoy its bounty.

7 How excellently you recommend
the pleasures of kāma
and the trappings of authority!
But only those
who don't indulge and who give up power
who find fulfilment.

8 Dharma and adharma are needed
to rule a kingdom efficiently.
You have both.
My advice is:
Give up this mahā-burden.
Seek refuge elsewhere.

9 To fill a single stomach,
a tiger kills indiscriminately
so many creatures.
So many feeble
and greedy animals conveniently
live off his spoils.

10 Look at the vast difference
between these two –
A saṁnyasī gives up worldly things
and finds peace;
a luxuriating rājā
is always restless.

11 Victorious over hell are those
who feed on leaves,
who eat grain husked by stones
or their teeth,
who subsist on water and air,
frugally.

12 A king who controls the earth,
and a person
who considers gold and stone
to be the same –
it's he who finds fulfilment,
not the earth-lord.

13 Don't be hugely ambitious,
limit your desires
and curb your ego.
Take shelter
in the imperishable refuge
now and hereafter.

14 The free from sensual pleasures
never grieve.
Why are you running after
sensual pleasures?
Give them up,
and transcend deceit and despair.

15 There are two celebrated paths:
the *pitṛ*-path
and the path of the gods.
Yajñas take you to the *pitṛs*;
mokṣa is attained
by the god-path.

16 By tapasyā, brahmacarya,
and study
of Vedic scriptures,
mahā-ṛṣis have freed themselves
of their bodies,
and attained the deathless realm.

17 Sensual pleasures are the fetters
of this world.
They are also known as karma.
Be free of the fetters
of good and bad karma,
and attain the supreme felicity.

18 In this connection is cited
a verse of Janaka
who had transcended the duality
of life,
and experienced, as it were,
mokṣa itself:

19 "I have so much,
  yet I have nothing at all.
Let Mithilā burn,
  let Mithila fall,
I have lost nothing,
  I have nothing at all."

20 Like a man on a hill top
  sees people below him,
with tranquil vision,
  a wise man ungrievingly
sees unwise people
  grieving needlessly.

21 The serene observer
  is the real seer,
the truly wise one.
  What else is wisdom
except insight into the unknown
  and unseen?

22 The person who can absorb
  the words of sages
with purified ātmans
  who have experienced Brahman –
that person is deserving
  of the deepest respect.

23 When a person sees
  the many everywhere
as really one,
  all diversity as one unity –
then he has experienced
  Brahman.

24 Only those with *buddhi*-perception
  experience this –
not the unintelligent,
  not the crookedly perceiving,
not the little-minded,
  not the ones without tapasyā.

SECTION EIGHTEEN

1 Yudhiṣṭhira stopped (continued Vaiśampāyana)
but his arrow-sharp words
deeply pained Arjuna,
who spoke up before the rājā:

2 There is a very old story they tell,
O descendant of Bharata,
about an exchange of ideas between
the Videha rājā Janaka and his wife.

3 It so happened once
that the rājā of Videha
decided to leave his kingdom
and become a mendicant.
His queen spoke to him,
sadly.

4 Shaving his head,
renouncing wealth, children,
wives, precious gems
of all kinds,
all worldly paths, even the sacred fire,
Janaka

5 Resolved to subsist
on a fistful of dropped corn,
discarded all envious feelings,
cultivated disinterest –
and when his beloved wife
saw this,

6 Being an intelligent lady,
she was upset and angry
with her husband,
and met him alone,
and said fearlessly these words
for his welfare:

7 "Why are you so eager to abandon
this wealth-and-corn-
rich kingdom to live
like a skull-bowl mendicant?
Living on fallen corn stalks
does not become you.

8 O lord of the earth!
You say one thing,
and do another.
You give up a kingdom, O rājā,
but you cling
to a fistful of fallen corn!

9 With a fistful of corn,
O rājā,
how will you ever gratify
guests and gods
and ṛṣis and *pitṛs*?
It's so pointless.

10 O ruler of the earth!
You abandon
gods, guests and *pitṛs*,
forgetting to work for them,
you conveniently
become a mendicant.

11 You were the life support
of thousands
of Brahmins
well-versed in the three Vedas –
and today you are reduced
to begging from them!

12 Shutting your eyes
to the dazzle of luxury,
you scrounge about like a dog.
You have made
your mother son-less,
and me, Kausalyā, husband-less.

13 And all these dharma-following Kṣatriyas
who served you
faithfully,
expecting to be rewarded,
poor creatures,
you have left them forlorn.

14 Mokṣa is uncertain, O rājā,
and fate is there, of course;
but what will happen
to these poor followers
now that you have deserted them,
who knows?

15 Is it not a heinous crime
to forsake
one's dharma-wedded wife?
For such selfishness,
there is neither this world
nor the next.

16 Do tell me – what makes you
give up a garlands
and perfumes and ornaments
and dresses
and leave your home
and take to begging?

17 You were a mahā-generous lake
where everyone came
to slake their thirst.
A giant tree, sheltering all.
Now you must supplicate
and seek shelter from others.

18 If an elephant stops working
and lies down,
he becomes a feast for wild beasts
and flesh-consuming worms.
What will happen to you,
alone and vulnerable?

19 Supposing your begging bowl
falls and breaks,
you three-pronged staff and robe
get stolen –
what will be the state
of your mind then?

20 If you argue
that a fistful of fallen corn
and a kingdom
are to you the same,
then what is the logic
in giving up the kingdom?

21 How have you fully renounced
if you still hanker
for a fistful of fallen corn?
And, my dear lord,
are you still mine then,
and am I still yours?

22 If you still care for me,
O rājā,
then rule this world,
enjoy its palaces,
beds, conveyances,
dresses and ornaments.

23 Renunciation is fine for the poor
and friend-less.
What sense is there
in a prosperous person
to renounce palatial mansions
and pleasures?

24 One gives gifts,
another receives gifts.
The two are very different.
Compare the two.
Who is superior?
Please take this seriously.

25 Giving to a habitual beggar,
and giving
to a proud receiver,
Compare the two.
Who is superior?
Please take this seriously.

26 A fire is not satisfied
till it has consumed
every single faggot you feed it.
A begging Brahmin
is never at peace
till he gets his begging needs.

27 In this world,
the donor is the life-support
of all who are in need.
Without a generous rājā,
how will pious mokṣa-seekers
attain mokṣa?

28 No food, no householder;
no householder,
no alms-receiving mendicant.
Food is life.
The food-provider
is the life-giver.

29 Renouncers of households
also depend on households
for their survival.
They are supported
by what
they have rejected.

30 Renouncing, head-shaving and begging
do not make
a *bhikṣuka*-mendicant.
The true *bhikṣuka*
is he who renounces selfishness
and trivial pleasures.

31 O lord of the earth!
The free man is he
who is detached from the world,
yet seemingly worldly;
he is fetter-free, friend and foe
are to him the same.

32 There are those who shave their heads
and wear saffron
and go around begging,
but they are tied to the world,
because to them
begging is a profession.

33 And then there are the fools
who discard the three Vedas,
their professions,
their children,
wear saffron,
and set out with a three-pronged staff.

34 What use is saffron on the body
without saffron in the heart?
Pure selfishness.
These shaven dunderheads,
flaunting the flag of dharma,
are hypocrites.

35 Restrain your senses, mahārāja,
and be victorious
like the shaven-headed,
saffron-robed sādhus
clad in deerskin
or bark-dress.

36 Where is the man of dharma
who can excel
the person who collects materials
for his guru's sacred fire,
and gives away lavish *dakṣiṇās*
and other charities."

37 Janaka was a rājā
renowned in this world as a truth-knower
(continued Arjuna),
but even he fell prey to confusion.
Don't fall prey
to similar confusion.

38 If we always abide by dharma,
if we continue
our charities and other pieties,
practise tapasyā,
refrain from cruelty,
kāma and anger,

39 And promote the welfare
of our subjects
by virtuously distributing gifts,
and by cherishing gurus and elders,
we will attain
the happiest of realms.

40 By gratifying
gods and guests
and all living beings,
by honouring Brahmins,
by truth-speaking,
we will attain
the happy realms
of our hearts' desire.

SECTION NINETEEN

1 *Tāta*, dear brother (said Yudhiṣṭhira),
I am fully aware
of what the Vedas say
and what the śāstras say.
The Vedas say "Carry on with karma"
and "Give up karma."

2 The śāstras are full of contradictions.
I have given deep thought
to this.
I know the mantras of the Vedas
recommend
both action and inaction.

3 You are well-versed in weapons,
you keep the vow of a warrior.
You are not very good at grasping the truth
that is in the śāstras.

4 Even those who have insight
into the śāstras
and are dedicated to dharma
are not competent to advise me.
See dharma clearly
before you start advising.

5 O Arjuna! Son of Kuntī!
But I do not mind.
In fact, I am happy –
what you have said
you have said
out of brotherly affection.

6 As far as the dharma of war
and the battlefield
are concerned,
there is none in the three worlds
who can come anywhere
even close to you.

7 Dharma is subtle and complex,
O Dhananjaya-Arjuna.
Perhaps too subtle for you.
That does not mean
you should doubt
if I understand dharma or not.

8

The ways of war you know very well.
You have never really served
your elders.
How can you know
their views on dharma
in brief or in detail?

9

According to the wise,
tapasyā, renunciation,
and what-lies-beyond-ritual lead to fulfilment.
Better than tapasyā is renunciation,
better than renunciation
is what-lies-beyond-ritual.

10

Since you seem so convinced,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
that wealth is all-important,
let me explain to you
why wealth is far
from being important.

11

You will see in this world
many dharmātmās
devoted to tapasyā and sacred texts;
also many ṛṣis
rich in tapasyā.
All these attain the eternal realms.

12

And there are many steady-minded men
with no enemies.
These, and others,
prefer to live in a forest,
where they study sacred texts,
and so attain heaven.

13

Still others of āryan nobility
control their senses,
abandon the tamas-darkness
of ignorant folly,
and attain the northern realm
of pious renouncers.

14 There is the southern realm
of dazzling light,
where go all those
who are caught up in karma
that makes them special victims
of the funeral pyre.

15 But what the aspirants for mokṣa
desire to see
is unseeable and indescribable.
It is attained only through yoga.
Very hard indeed
to know what it is.

16 It is said that many gifted
with poetic insight
got together once to study
the sacred texts.
Some said, "The essence is here."
Others, "No, it's not."

17 Slice a banana trunk –
it's flabby, empty.
They dissected the Vedas,
Śāstras and Āraṇyakas,
and found no essence there,
however hard they looked.

18 There are some who reject
solitary contemplation,
and declare that the ātman,
dwelling in this body of five elements,
experiences desire,
disgust and other feelings.

19 But eyes cannot see the ātman,
words cannot describe it,
it is so subtle.
It is within all creatures,
whose attachment to karma revolves them
in death and rebirth.

20 What one should do, therefore,
is focus the mind on virtue,
get a grip on desire,
break the fetters of karma,
and discover
what is true happiness.

21 When there is such a path
recommended by good men
with discriminating intelligence,
why, Arjuna,
do you praise the worthlessness
of material wealth?

22 O descendant of Bharata!
This was also
the vision of śāstra-learned men
of our tradition
who believed in charity,
yajña and karma.

23 There are argumentative paṇḍits
who are really fools
trapped in dogmatic thinking
who keep saying,
"No, it is not like this.
This is not so."

24 Others there are, very learned,
fluent in speech,
who travel from place to place,
addressing crowds,
trying to prove the untrue
to be true.

25 We can't make sense of these,
O Pārtha-Arjuna;
how will ordinary people?
I have heard
of many such so-called mahā-wise
śāstra-experts.

26 O Kaunteya-Arjuna!
What matters is truth.
The truth-seeker,
by tapasyā,
becomes mahā-powerful;
by knowledge,
becomes mahā-discerning;
by renunciation,
becomes mahā-fulfilled.
Always, and for ever.

SECTION TWENTY

1 No sooner had Yudhiṣṭhira finished
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
than the mahā-tapasyā ṛṣi
Devasthāna
said to him these words
eloquently reasoned:

2 "Phālguna-Arjuna has already
given his views
on the importance of wealth.
I will speak
on the same subject.
Listen carefully.

3 O rājā who has no enemies!
You have won this war with dharma.
Why are you spurning your victory
for no reason?

4 The Vedas extol the four stages
of human life:
student, householder, forest-dweller,
and renouncer.
O mahā-muscled earth-lord!
Follow them in that order.

5 Organise elaborate yajñas
with lavish *dakṣiṇās.*
It's the ṛṣis, O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
who go in
for the yajña of Vedic study
and the yajña of knowledge..

6 There are also ṛṣis, O earth-lord,
who prefer
to practise tapasyā and be active.
And then
there are the Vaikhānasas
who are reported to say:

7 'It's best not to try too hard
to acquire wealth.'
Their argument is
that excessive running after wealth
brings with it far too many
problems and dangers.

8 Look at the amount of things
men accumulate
in their obsession to be rich!
They never realise
they become like foetus-killing criminals
while doing so.

9 Often wealth is given
not to the deserving
but to the undeserving –
with the result
that the dharma of charity
is abused and tainted.

10 The Creator created wealth
for wealth-possessors
to utilise wealth in yajñas.
All one's wealth should be spent
in the performance of yajñas –
this is what gives pleasure.

11 Gem-rich Indra surpassed
even the gods by yajñas,
and achieved lordship of heaven,
where he radiates glory.
The supreme use of wealth
is in performance of yajñas.

12 Deerskin-dressed Kṛttivāsa mahātmā
Mahādeva-Śiva offered himself
as oblation in the Sarva-yajña
and became Deva-deva God-of-gods
and, surpassing them all,
he radiates glory.

13 Avikṣit's son, king Marutta
defeated Śakra-Indra himself,
the rājā of the gods,
and Śrī-Laksmi herself graced
his yajña where all the vessels
were made of pure gold.

14 You must have heard
of the earth-lord Hariṣcandra,
whose yajñas
brought him enormous fame
and happiness.
He was only a human,
yet with his wealth
he overcame Śakra-Indra.
In yajñas alone
should wealth be utilised."

SECTION TWENTY-ONE

1 An old story from history
(continued Devasthāna)
is connected with this.
Once upon a time,
asked by Indra,
Bṛhaspati said:

[XII:21:2-7]

Transcreated by P. Lal

2 "Contentment is heaven.
The highest happiness
is contentment.
Nothing excels
a mind
that is content.

3 When you pull in your kāma-desires
within yourself, like a tortoise
pulling in its limbs within its shell,
the ātman shines with spiritual radiance.

4 When you do not fear,
and you are not feared,
when you overcome
kāma and dislike,
then you see your ātman
in yourself.

5 When you have neither hate
nor possessiveness
for any living creature
in deed, thought and speech,
then you have attained
Brahman.

6 Understand this well, O Bharata!
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Whatever dharma you cherish,
that you become.
Your dharma determines
what you see in your ātman.

7 Some praise *sāma*-serenity,
others praise *vyāyāma*-struggle.
Some decry serenity,
others decry struggle.
Others praise both
serenity and struggle.

8 Some praise yajñas,
others praise
saṁnyāsa-renunciation.
Some praise gift-giving,
and still others
praise gift-taking.

9 Some give up everything
and are happy
with silent meditation.
Others praise ruling
and protecting the subjects
of a kingdom

10 After scattering and slaughtering
one's enemies.
Others prefer the solitary life.
Carefully examining
all these ways and attitudes,
wise men conclude

11 That that dharma is ideal
for good men
which is based on compassion
for all creatures.
Compassion, truth-speaking, justice,
kindness, restraint,

12 Having children from one's own wife,
friendliness, modesty,
abstaining from fickle behaviour –
this is the dharma most desirable,
as declared
by Self-Born Svayambhuva Manu.

13 Cherish this dharma assiduously,
O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Who rules a kingdom
with self-discipline,
treating equally
the pleasant and the unpleasant,

14 That Kṣatriya
who follows the rājā-śāstras,
and eats only the yajña's remnants,
who punishes the wicked,
and is happy
rewarding the good,

15 Who is learned in dharma enough
to assist his subjects
to follow dharma,
and bequeathing the kingdom
to his son,
retires to live in a forest,

16 Never letting laziness
impair his mission,
as recommended in the Vedas, –
that is the rājā,
O rājā, who knows
the true meaning of dharma.

17 He enjoys the fruits of this world
and the next.
In my opinion,
very difficult to achieve is nirvāṇa –
it is too full
of problems.

18 But those who practise this dharma,
who believe
in truth, charity, tapasyā, non-injury
and other guṇas,
who have succeeded in controlling
their kāma and anger,

19 Who battle for the protection
of cows and Brahmins,
and excellently are able to discipline
their minds –
they are the ones who soon attain
the supreme goal.

20 O scourge-of-foes Yudhiṣṭhira!
The Rudras
the Vasus
the Ādityas
the Sadhyas
and the rāja-ṛṣis
cherished this dharma.
As a result,
with their meritorious karma
they attained heaven.

SECTION TWENTY-TWO

1 Once again (continued Vaiśampāyana)
Arjuna spoke to his elder brother
in an attempt to revive the spirit
of unfading-in-excellence Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 "You who are wise in dharma,
you who know all the dharmas there are!
O foe-conqueror! Why are you so depressed,
after gaining this hard-to-win kingdom?

3 Mahārāja! So far as Kṣatriya-dharma
is concerned,
death on the battlefield
is far better
than the performance
of countless yajñas.

4 *Prabhu*! Lord! Tapasyā and renunciation
are the dharma
laid down for Brahmins.
Death in battle
is what is laid down
as best for Kṣatriyas.

5 O finest of the Bharatas!
Mahā-awesome
is the dharma of Kṣatriyas:
Use of war-weapons
and death by war-weapons
at the right time.

6 If a Brahmin adopts Kṣatriya-dharma,
O rājā,
that too is perfectly acceptable,
because Brahmins,
as you know, were the progenitors
of Kṣatriyas.

7 O ruler of men!
It is not right
for a Kṣatriya to take up
tapasyā and yajña and renunciation,
and to depend
on others.

8 O bull-brave Bharata!
You are truly
an all-dharma-knower, a dharmātmā,
a rājā,
you are a practical visionary
with insight into now and later.

9 Shed this mental depression
and get ready
to fulfil your true karma.
The heart
of a Kṣatriya is as hard
as thunder.

10 O Indra-among-men!
You have wiped out your enemies;
thorn-free now
is your kingdom.
Start preparing now for yajñas
and gift-giving.

11 Though a Brahmin's son,
Indra became a Kṣatriya
by his karma.
He slaughtered
eight hundred and ten
of his wicked relatives.

12 O lord of the world!
This karma of his
is praised and pūjā-respected.
I have heard
Indra became mahā-Indra
as a result.

13 O Indra-among-men!
O mahārāja!
Be like Indra,
cast off your depression
and perform yajñas
replete with lavish dakṣiṇās.

14 O bull-brave Kṣatriya!
You have no cause
for even the slightest regret.
Those who perished
by Kṣatriya-dharma
have attained the supreme goal.

15 O bull-brave Bharata!
What happened, had to happen.
O tiger-brave rājā!
There is no way
of escaping what fate
has in store for us."

SECTION TWENTY-THREE

1 The words
of the sleep-conquering hero
Guḍākeśa-Arjuna
left Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
speechless.
Seeing him silent,
island-born
Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
said
to the Kaurava descendant:

[XII:23:2-7]

Transcreated by P. Lal

2 "Gentle Yudhiṣṭhira!
What Arjuna says is the truth.
According to the śāstras,
the highest dharma
is *gārhyasthya* –
the dharma of the householder.

3 O wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira!
Follow the śāstras.
Abide by your sva-dharma.
Giving up *gārhasthya*
and meditating in a forest
is not for you.

4 O ruler of the earth!
Gods, *pitṛs,*
guests and servants
depend on the householder
for survival.
So make this your responsibility.

5 O ruler of men!
Birds and beasts
and other creatures depend also
on the householder,
which is why the best dharma
is *gārhasthya.*

6 Of the four stages of life,
this is the most difficult.
Very difficult indeed
for the weak and over-sensitive.
Which is why, O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
you should practise it.

7 You are well-versed in the Vedas,
you have practised mahā-tapasyā.
Which is why
you must accept the task
of ruling the kingdom
of your fathers and grandfathers.

8 O mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
Tapasyā, yajña,
learning, alms-begging,
restraint of the senses, meditation,
living in solitude, contentment, knowledge –
as much as possible,

9 Are what is needed by Brahmins
who seek fulfilment.
I will now tell you
about the duties
of Kṣatriyas,
which you are already aware of.

10 Yajña, study, enthusiasm,
discontent with achievement
(and desire for more achievement),
administration of justice and punishment,
unbending strictness,
protection of his subjects,

11 Knowledge of the Vedas,
organising of tapasyās,
exemplary character,
accumulation of wealth,
and distribution of wealth
to the deserving, –

12 These, O lord of the world,
are the duties of a rājā.
A rājā who performs
this karma
obtains fulfilment in this world
and the next.

13 The rājā who wields the rod of punishment,
O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,
is among these the most estimable,
because power makes a Kṣatriya,
and punishment
depends on power.

14 These are the duties, O rājā,
of a Kṣatriya,
which lead to his fulfilment.
In this connection,
there is a small *gāthā*-song
by Bṛhaspati:

15 'Like a snake that slithers
inside a hole
and devours a lurking mouse,
the earth swallows
a non-fighting rājā
and a Brahmin who sticks to his house.'

16 They say the rāja-ṛṣi Sudyumna
achieved fulfilment
by wielding the rod of punishment,
and so did Dakṣa,
the son of Pracetas,
attain the supreme success."

17 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"What did Sudyumna do
to attain the supreme fulfilment?
I want to know more
about the karma
of that royal earth-lord."

18 An ancient history (replied Vyāsa)
is narrated
in this connection –
a story about two brothers
named Śaṅkha and Likhita
famed for vows and tapasyā.

19 They had separate āshrams
on the bank
of the Bāhudā river,
enchanting places
graced with any number
of flowering-and-fruiting trees.

20 It so happened once that Likhita
went to the āshram of Śaṅkha;
as luck would have it,
Śaṅkha was not there –
he had also left his āshram
on some mission.

21 Arriving at the āshram of his brother,
Likhita plucked
many ripe fruits
from the plentiful trees,
and other fruits also
that he struck down,

22 And unconcernedly settled down
to a sumptuous fruit-feast.
Hardly
had the twice-born
begun his repast
than his brother Śaṅkha returned,

23 And caught him in the act.
Śaṅkha said:
"Where did you get these
delicious fruits
that you are gobbling
with such delight?"

24 Likhita looked up
at his elder brother,
greeted him respectfully,
and said, smiling a little,
"Why, I got these fruits
from here."

25 This upset Śaṅkha,
and he said angrily:
"You never asked me.
You took these fruits
without my permission.
You stole them.

26 Go immediately to the rājā
and confess
your misdemeanour to him.
Tell him:
'O excellent earth-lord!
Without permission

27 I have taken something.
Punish me,
O lord of men. I am a thief.
I deserve the punishment
your sva-dharma decrees
for a thief.'

28 O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
Obeying the command
of his elder brother,
strict-vow-practising Likhita
proceeded to the palace
of ruler-of-men Sudyumna.

29 When Sudyumna heard
from his door-keeper
that Likhita had come,
that lord-of-men
personally went with his ministers
to greet him.

30 Rājā Sudyumna asked
the wise-in-dharma Likhita:
"*Bhagavan*! Revered one!
What brings you here?
Whatever it is,
consider it as granted."

31 The twice-born ṛṣi Likhita
said to Sudyumna:
"First, promise me you will,
and only then
will I tell you
what I want from you.

32 O bull-brave hero!
Without his permission,
I ate my elder brother's fruits.
I deserve
to be punished for this,
O mahārāja!"

33 "O bull-brave Brahmin!"
replied Sudyumna.
"You ask to be punished
by a rājā.
Remember he also has the power
to pardon you.

34 You are a man of pure karma
and mahā-vows.
I pardon you.
If you there is anything else
you want,
let me know, and it is yours."

35 Despite the repeated assurances
of the mahā-ātmaned
earth-lord Sudyumna,
the Brahma-ṛṣi Likhita
asked for nothing else
but punishment.

36 So the mahā-ātmaned protector
of the earth
ordered that the hands
of Likhita be cut off.
Handless Likhita
left the palace.

37 Mutilated Likhita
went to his brother Śaṅkha
and said:
"I have received my punishment.
Forgive me
my wicked-minded crime."

38 "O dharma-wise one!" said Śaṅkha.
"I am not angry.
You have not harmed me.
We come from a family
of gentle Brhmins.
You harmed dharma.

39 Hurry to the river Bāhudā
and offer water-libations
to the gods, ṛṣis and *pitṛs*.
And see to it that in future
your mind never moves
into adharma."

40 Following the advice of Śaṅkha,
Likhita proceeded
to the river Bāhudā,
where he performed
the required rites
of penitential purification.

41 Suddenly, two lotus-like hands
materialised
on the stumps of his arms.
He was stupefied;
rushing to his brother,
he showed him his new hands.

42 Śaṅkha said to him:
"Calm your mind.
My tapasyā has done this.
Have no doubts.
This is the way
fate works."

43 Likhita said:
"O mahā-radiant finest of the twice-born!
If such is the power
of your tapasyā,
why did you not purify me
to begin with?"

44 “I could have done so,”
replied Śaṅkha,
“but I am not the punisher.
By punishing you,
the king has purified himself,
you, and your *pitṛs.*”

45 O finest-of-the-Pāṇḍavas Yudhiṣṭhira!
(added Vyāsa)
By doing what he did,
rājā Sudyumna,
like Pracetas's son Dakṣa,
gained the supreme fulfilment.

46 Mahārāja! A Kṣatriya's dharma
is the protection of his subjects.
Anything else
is the wrong path.
You must steady your mind
and cast off depression.

47 You are wise in dharma,
you are firm in truth.
O Indra-among-rājās!
The rod of punishment
is a Kṣatriya's dharma –
not head-shaven holiness.

SECTION TWENTY-FOUR

1 The mahā-ṛṣi muni
Kṛṣṇā-Dvaipāyana
dark-skinned island-born
Vyāsa
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
again said these words
to Kuntī's son,
the one-without-a-foe
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 *Tāta!* Dear one!
Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
All the hopes
which your noble-minded brothers
cherished
during their forest-exile –

3 O finest of the Bharatas,
fulfil these hopes
of the mahā-chariot-heroes.
O son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Like Nahuṣa's son Yayāti,
rule this vast earth!

4 O tiger-brave hero!
Think of how they suffered,
your tapasyā-dedicated brothers,
and now
remove their suffering
and bring them joy.

5 O lord of the world!
O Bharata descendant!
Relish dharma, artha and kāma
with your brothers now,
and later think of renouncing;
if you must.

6 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Descendant of Bharata!
Free yourself first of your debt
to supplicants, *pitṛs*, and gods –
and then think
of other things.

7 O mahārāja!
O delight of the Kauravas!
Perform first the Sarva-medha
and Aśvamedha yajñas –
they will lead you
to the supreme goal.

8 Son of Pāṇḍu!
By involving your brothers in yajñas
and distributing
lavish *dakṣiṇās,*
you will attain
incomparable fame.

9 O finest of the Kauravas!
O tiger-brave mortal!
I have heard you speak.
Now listen to my words,
which will bring you
a never-fading dharma.

10 Lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
You know well enough
that men skilled in dharma
but coveting others' wealth
are the ones who instigate a king
to win a war.

11 Self-evidence, hypothesis,
and comparison,
āgama-Vedas, inference,
and tradition,
as well as doubt,
and investigation,

12 Also, O Bharata-descendant,
appearance, symbol,
goal, and effort,
promise, intention,
and example,
and premise,

13 And logical conclusion –
these are ways
of arriving at universal statements.
To achieve celebrity
in many fields,
one has to make use of these.

14 Self-evidence and hypothesis
are the yoni of all.
Proof is the basis
of all punishment.
Proof-less punishment
is the ruin of a ruler.

15 No blame attaches to a king who,
taking account
of time and place,
abiding by śāstra-principles,
finds just reason to pardon
even a gang of robbers.

16 If a king, even after taking one-sixth
as tax-tribute,
is still unable to protect
the subjects of his kingdom,
he takes on himself one-fourth
the blame for their crimes.

17 And listen to what prevents
a king from falling from dharma.
Violate the śāstras,
you transgress dharma.
Abide by the śāstras,
you become fearless.

18 Put aside kāma and anger;
follow the śāstras,
and like a father
look equally on all your subjects,
and you will never be stained
with ill-deed.

19 O maha-radiant one!
No blame attaches
to a rājā who fails
to accomplish a task
because fate interferes
with its completion.

20 It goes without saying
that mind and muscle
must be used to crush enemies.
No truck with miscreants.
The kingdom is not a property
for private profit.

21 It is absolutely essential, Yudhiṣṭhira,
that the brave, the good,
and the learned be respected.
And all owners
of large herds of cattle
should be protected.

22 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
The rājā is both
lord and servant of his kingdom.
It is his duty
to attend to the welfare
of his subjects.

23 The truly immensely learned
should be entrusted
with the protection
of dharma and justice.
O earth-ruler!
The proof-cherishing, the experts in law,

24 The Veda-knowers, O rājā,
the brilliant
in debate and argument
and śāstra-knowledge
should be dispensers
of advice and justice.

25 The intelligence that excels
in debate-śāstras,
dharma-śāstras
and the laws relating to punishment
is the intelligence that attains
the three worlds.

26 O rājā!
O earth-lord!
It is right
that only those yajñas
be performed,
only those rituals
that conform
to the truths of the Vedas
and the decrees of the śāstras.

27 Only those who are learned
in *anvīkṣikī* logical philosophy,
in the three Vedas,
in the rules of punishment
should be employed
in responsible positions
because they excel in intelligence.
However, no matter how brilliant,
full trust should never be placed
in a single person.

28 A rājā who is unable to protect
his subjects,
who is impulsive and arrogant,
rigid and envious,
who entertains malice
for fellow-monarchs,
will soon find himself
gaining notoriety as a tyrant.

29 And remember, O king:
If a rājā's subjects
are not protected by him,
if he cannot alleviate
the sufferings
that fate afflicts them with,
if robbers impoverish them,
their misery gets transferred to him.

30 On the other hand, Yudhiṣṭhira,
no blame attaches
to a king who proceeds
with the task of ruling
by consulting worthy ministers,
and planning carefully
for the general welfare
of his subjects at all times.

31 The point is
that a man can only start a work,
doing
the best he can.
Fate can intervene,
and success become
impossible to achieve.
But no blame attaches to a dedicated king.

32 Son of Pāṇḍu!
O tiger-brave rājā!
Let me in this connection
place before you
a story about a rājā –
an ancient story.
The king concerned
was Hayagrīva, a rājā-ṛṣi.

33 Yudhiṣṭhira!
He was renowned
for his valour.
He had decimated
his enemies in battle.
But in the end,
his enemies isolated him
on the battlefield, and slew him.

34 But he was renowned
for his feats
both on the battlefield
and in the protection and welfare
of his subjects.
His bravery in battle
earned him great glory,
and death brought him the joys of heaven.

35 Disciplining his ātman
with deep dedication,
he fought his battles
and slew his enemies,
But in the end
robbers surrounded him
and viciously sliced him dead.
But mahātmā Hayagrīva is now enjoying heaven.

36 His bow was the yajña-pole,
the bowstring the rope
that trussed the sacrificed beast,
arrows the small ladle,
sword the large yajña ladle,
blood the sacred ghee,
chariot the *vedī*-altar,
the four chariot-horses were the four *hotṛ*-priests.

37 Into the yajña-fire,
that lion-brave rājā
poured his enemies
as the sacred libations,
and at the end poured
his *praṇa*-life breath.
Absolved of all blame,
he now enjoys the realm of the gods.

38 The performance of yajñas
was second nature to him.
He governed his kingdom
with prudent policies.
Forsaking his body,
large-minded Hayagrīva
left to the world his renown,
and dwells in the realm of the gods.

39 With yogic dedication
and selflessness,
fulfilled by fate,
extolled by his subjects,
administering just punishment,
protecting his people,
serene-in-dharma mahātmā rājā Vājigrīva-Hayagrīva
is now enjoying heaven.

40 He was learned.
He could renounce.
He had śraddhā.
He was grateful.
So rājā Hayagrīva
has gone to the realms
apportioned to those
who are dedicated and learned and respected.

41 He was wise in the Vedas.
He studied the śāstras.
He devoted himself
to the welfare of his kingdom.
After ensuring that each
of the four castes
was firm in its sva-dharma,
mahātmā Hayagrīva is in the realm of the gods.

42 He won many battles.
He cherished his subjects.
He drank the soma-juice
of the yajña ritual.
He gratified the twice-born.
He administered punishment
for his people's welfare.
Now Hayagrīva enjoys the realm of the gods.

43 The good and the learned
applaud the example
he set by his noble
and inspiring character.
The merit-filled glory
of mahātmā Hayagrīva
won him the heaven
reserved exclusively for the world's heroes.

SECTION TWENTY-FIVE

1 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira heard Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna's angry words;
reverentially he said to Vyāsa:

2 "This kingdom and its multitudes
of pleasures gives me no joy.
I find life tasteless.
Grief is grinding away at me.

3 O muni!
The lamentations of young women
who have lost husbands and sons
pierce me
to my very core.
Peace deserts me."

4 No sooner had he heard this
than wise-in-the-Vedas Vyāsa,
mahā-rich in insight,
learned in yoga,
and percipient in dharma,
said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

5 “You cannot by karma
get back what is lost.
Nor will thinking about it help.
No man can help you recover it.
It’s all in the hands
of Cosmic Time Kāla.

6 Your intelligence will not help,
The śastras will not help.
If Kāla wants it that way,
What is lost is lost for ever.
If Kāla is gracious,
Even a fool will recover
What he thought was lost for ever.
Whatever comes to a person
Comes through the kindness of Kāla.

7 In bad times,
Nothing seems to work.
Not skill,
Not mantras,
Not drugs and medicines.
In good times,
Skill, mantras and medicines
Become agents of Kāla
And promoters of still more prosperity.

8 And the winds blow
because Kāla wills it,
And the clouds send rain
because Kāla propels them,
And the lotuses bloom
because the time is ripe,
And the trees in the forest
burst into fruit and flower
because Kāla wants them to.

9 And the nights are dark
because Kāla wants them dark,
And the days are bright
because Kāla wants them bright,
And the moon is full
because Kāla wants it full.
No fruiting of fruits, no flowering of flowers
without Kāla,
No flowing of rivers.

10 Happy are the birds
and the snakes and the beasts,
Happy the deer and elephants
because of Kāla.
In the fullness of time,
women conceive,
In the fullness of time
come winter and summer
and the monsoon rains.

11 If Kāla does not will it,
no body is born;
It Kala does not will it,
no one dies;
If Kala does not will it,
no voice is heard,
the young do not grow;
No seed will sprout
without Kāla's approval.

12 If Kāla does not will it,
the sun will not rise;
Without approval from Kāla,
the sun will not set
in the hills in the west.
And the waxing and waning
of the moon will not be,
nor the ebb and flow of the tide.

13 In this connection, Yudhiṣṭhira,
  is recited
the ancient story of grief-torn
  rājā Senajit.
Look upon this story
  as an example.

14 Kāla is irresistible.
  Mortality is its prey.
Sooner or later,
  everything must succumb to Kāla.

15 Some men kill other men.
  Then, O rājā,
other men kill the killers.
  This is the way of the world.
The truth is:
  No one kills, no one dies.

16 One says, "I have killed."
  Another says,
"No, you have not."
  The truth is –
it's a fact of nature:
  what is born will die.

17 Wealth lost;
  wife, son, and father lost;
and he laments,
  "Aho! How I suffer!"
He broods,
  trying hard to overcome his grief.

18 Why are you so foolish?
  How does it help you
to keep lamenting the dead?
  All you do
is add grief to grief,
  fear to fear.

19 Your body is not yours.
    The earth is not yours.
It belongs
    to others too.
Why delude yourself?
    See the truth.

20 Grief has a thousand causes.
    So has joy.
Day after day
    the fool becomes their victim;
the pāṇḍit is not affected
    by them.

21 What happens is simple:
    Time passes,
and they create like and dislike,
    they become progenitors
of happiness
    and sorrow.

22 This is a world of sorrow,
    not happiness.
All you really get is sorrow.
    Longing creates sorrow.
The ending of sorrow
    is what is known as happiness.

23 When happiness ends, sorrow begins.
    When sorrow ends, happiness begins.
There is never
    a never-ending sorrow,
and there is never
    a never-ending happiness.

24 Since happiness begins when sorrow ends,
    and sorrow begins when happiness ends,
the only way
    of ensuring unending happiness
is to renounce
    happiness and sorrow,

25 Because sorrow is inevitable
after happiness,
and happiness inevitable after sorrow.
Whatever causes
sorrow and burning pain
and mahā-anxiety –

26 Even if it be a limb
of your body –
cut it off and cast it away.
Happiness, sorrow;
pleasant, unpleasant – accept both.
Conquer both.

27 My dear friend!
Try being disagreeable
with your wife and your sons,
and you will soon see
who cares for who, and how much,
and what is what.

28 Only the utter fools of this world,
or those who transcend reason,
commonsense and intelligence,
can be said to be happy.
All the in-between others
are doomed to suffer.

29 These were the words, Yudhiṣṭhira,
of the mahā-wise,
dharma-knowing ruler Senajit
who had insight
into present and future,
and into joy and sorrow.

30 Whatever the cause of your sorrow,
remember:
happiness is not going to be yours,
because sorrow is never-ending.
Sorrow breeds sorrow;
one sorrow leads to another.

31 Joy and sorrow, gain and loss,
growth and decline,
life and death –
this is the human condition.
Be patient. Be firm.
Transcend joy and sorrow.

32 A rājā's yajña is to fight.
A rājā's yoga is to punish.
A rājā's renunciation
is to distribute
lavish *dakṣiṇās*.
These three purify a rājā.

33 A rājā who rules his kingdom
with intelligence
grounded in a selfless ātman,
and guided by dharma
performs yajñas, and enjoys heaven
after forsaking his body;
he is lord of all the worlds,
he is the mahātmā.

34 That rājā is the enjoyer
of the realm of the gods
who wins victories,
who protects his people,
who drinks soma-juice at a yajña,
who punishes
for the welfare of his subjects,
and lays down his life in battle.

35 That rājā is the enjoyer
of the realm of the gods
who has knowledge of the Vedas,
who studies the śāstras,
who governs judiciously,
who encourages the practice of sva-dharma
for each of the four castes,
and who purifies his ātman.

36 Of all the rājās
of the world,
that rājā is the finest
of rājās
who, after reaching heaven,
receives the respect of all his subjects
in the towns of his kingdom
and in all his territories."

SECTION TWENTY-SIX

1 It was in this connection
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
that large-minded Yudhiṣṭhira
turned his attention
to Dhanañjaya-Arjuna
and said to him:

2 What you say is not right,
Pārtha-Arjuna,
that wealth is all in all,
that the poor live pointlessly,
without happiness,
or hope of heaven.

3 Many have found fulfilment by devoting themselves
to the yajña of learned studies.
Many munis have attained the eternal realm
by their practice of tapasyā.

4 There are ṛṣis living in āshrams,
all-dharma-knowing ṛṣis,
devoting all their time to protecting
and cherishing the tradition.
The gods describe them as Brahmins
or Brahman-knowers.

5 You should make a distinction,
O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
between ṛṣis studying the Vedas,
and ṛṣis devoted
to pure knowledge,
and ṛṣis steadfast in dharma.

6 O lordly son of Pāṇḍu!
I understand the Vaikhānasa
forest-dwelling *vānaprastha* ṛṣis
to mean that all our deeds
should be directed to the pursuit
of pure knowledge.

7 O descendant of Bharata!
The Ajas,
Pṛṣṇis, Sikatas, Aruṇas,
and Ketu ṛṣis
attained heaven solely
by study of the Vedas.

8 Very difficult, O Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
are the ways
recommended by the Vedas:
studies, charity,
performance of yajñas,
self-control.

9 These are the paths that take
their performer to heaven
by the route
of the southern solstice.
I have already described those
who take this route.

10 The route of the northern solstice,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
you should know is the path
chosen and attained
by the radiant practitioners
of selfless activity.

11 The northern route is praised,
O Pārtha-Arjuna,
by the learned men of the past.
Indeed,
contentment is the highest heaven,
the supreme happiness.

12 Nothing excels contentment.
When one goes
beyond anger and exultation,
an equipoise is gained
which is indeed
the ultimate achievement.

13 And it is in this connection
that people cite the example
of a song by Yayāti,
which shows
how desires should be in-pulled,
like a tortoise its limbs:

14 "When you fear none,
and are feared by one,
when you want nothing,
and you hate no one,
then it can be said
you and Brahman are one.

15 When in your life
you learn to pay heed
to cause no one harm
in thought, word and deed,
then only do you begin
to be Brahman indeed.

16 Jolly and pride gone,
attachments decline,
knowledge of the ātman
then starts to shine,
then you can say
'Nirvāṇa is mine.' "

17 Pārtha-Arjuna!
Listen to me with full attention,
with all your senses in control.
Some cherish dharma,
other cultivate character,
some chase wealth.

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18 Desire wealth by all means,
but stop chasing it.
Wealth is corrupting,
and the dharma
that comes through wealth
is also corrupting.

19 I see it all the time,
and you should see it too:
It is hugely difficult
for a wealth-obsessed person
to give up things
that should be given up.

20 To be good is very difficult
for the wealthy.
You cannot be rich without exploitation.
You can be rich,
but you cannot escape
the problems of being rich.

21 Disregarding the fear of repentance,
what wickedness
will a weak-willed man not commit,
tempted by wealth –
even incurring the crime
of killing a foetus!

22 How it hurts an employer
to part with even
a little of his ill-gotten wealth
with his employees! –
he feels as if thieves
are robbing him.

23 Free from all this is one
who has no wealth.
He is the one who is happy.
You can have all
the wealth of the gods,
but you will still be unhappy.

24 There is in this connection
a yajña-song
recommended by those who are learned
in the three Vedas
to be chanted
during a yajña-performance:

25 "For yajñas the Creator created
the wealth that we treasure,
and created man to gather wealth
for yajñas in full measure;
it is wrong to waste wealth
in self-seeking pleasure."

26 O finest-of-wealth-possessors
Kaunteya-Arjuna!
The Creator lavishes wealth
on a person
so that he uses it
for the welfare of others.

27 Which is why it is said
wealth belongs
to nobody on earth.
So people with śraddhā
should use it in charity
or in yajñas.

28 The ideal use of wealth
is in charity,
not in more and more acquisition
and pleasure.
Why hoard or waste wealth
when good causes abound?

29 A dimwitted person who gives
to a person
who has fallen from sva-dharma
has to subsist
on dirt and filth
for a hundred years.

30 Even giving in charity
can be very difficult,
for the undeserving
often get the benefit,
and the deserving of charity
are left out.

31 However huge the wealth you acquire,
two problems remain.
The first: giving charity
to an undeserving person;
the second: not giving it
to a deserving person.

SECTION TWENTY-SEVEN

1 With young Abhimanyu dead
(continued Yudhiṣṭhira)
and Draupadī's sons dead,
and Dhṛṣṭadyumna,
and the earth-lords Drupada and Virāṭa,

2 And wise-in-dharma Vārṣṇeya,
the earth-ruler Dhṛṣṭaketu,
and so many more Indras-among-men
from so many lands
all killed on the field of battle,

3 I am tormented by grief,
I am responsible
for the murders of my kinsmen.
Driven by greed for a kingdom,
I have slaughtered
my own dynasty.

4 Driven by greed for a kingdom,
I have killed
Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma,
in whose lap, as a child,
I used to roll about
and play.

5 When I saw him pierced
by the arrows
of Pārtha-Arjuna,
which struck like thunderbolts,
and he stood there, reeling,
watched by Śikhaṇḍin,

6 My tall, brave-as-a-lion
Pitāmaha-grandfather,
bleeding all over,
arrows sticking in his body,
my heart went out to him
in deep grief.

7 I stood there like one dazed,
gazing at the spectacle
of a demolisher of chariots
staring fixedly east,
and swaying, as it were,
like a mountain.

8 The Kaurava elder who,
wielding bow and arrows,
fought a pitched battle
for many days
on Kurukṣetra
with the Bhārgava hero Paraśurāma,

9 The valiant son of a river
who singlehanded
challenged the worlds Kṣatriyas
at Vārāṇasī
when he carried away
the would-be brides,

10 The warrior who with the valour
of his weapons
incinerated the near-invincible emperor
Ugrāyudha –
I, I have been the cause
of his death.

[XII:27:11-16]

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11 He knew death came to him
as Pāñcāla Śikhaṇḍin,
yet he did not shoot back arrows
at Śikhaṇḍin –
this is the hero
whose life was taken by Arjuna.

12 O finest of munis!
When I saw
his blood-drenched body
sprawled on the field,
I was gripped
by a fever-filled despair.

13 He was the one
who brought us up
when we were children,
and we, greedy for a kingdom,
we scoundrels,
guru-killers,

14 We fools, for the sake
of an ephemeral kingdom,
we killed him.
And our ācārya Droṇa,
mahā-bowman,
pūjā-respected by all the earth-lords,

15 I, wicked I, went to him,
and lied to him
about his son!
And my guru
looked at me
and said to me:

16 "Tell me the truth,
O rājā:
is my son alive?"
A Brahmin,
he expected the truth from me.
I burn with shame!

17 But I was greedy
for a kingdom.
I lied.
I whispered the word "elephant".
It was wicked of me.
I killed my guru.

18 I ripped off my mask of truth,
I clubbed to death
an elephant
named Aśvatthāman,
and I said to my guru,
"Aśvatthāman is dead."

19 What horrible karma must I suffer
for doing what I did?
And I was the cause of death
of one who was never known
to turn his back in battle –
Karṇa,

20 Our eldest brother.
Is there a criminal worse than me
in this world?
And young Abhimanyu,
who was as brave
as a lion of the hills,

21 Because I lusted for a kingdom
I let him enter
the battle-formation of Droṇa.
Now I dare not look
dreadful-deed-doer Bībhatsu-Arjuna
in the eye,

22 Nor lotus-eyed Puṇḍarīkākṣa-Krishna,
so ashamed am I.
And Draupadī too,
in terrible agony,
suffering the loss
of her five sons,

23 Like the earth deprived
of her five mountains –
how I suffer with her!
I am wicked.
I have done wrong,
I am the ruin of this earth:

24 I will not get up,
I will sit where I am,
I will mortify my body,
I am a guru-killer,
I will take the *prāya*-vow,
I will fast to death.

25 Grant that in my next birth,
I am not be born
as a destroyer of his race.
I will take the vow,
I will eat no food,
I will drink no water.

26 O rich-in-tapasyā Vyāsa!
I will stay here
till my life-breath *prāṇa* dries up.
Be gracious to me,
leave me alone here,
and go where you please.

27 All I ask is your permission.
Give me leave
to leave my body.
(Vaiśampāyana continued:)
Saying this, mourning his relatives,
Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira

28 Was stopped by finest-of-munis
Vyāsa
who interrupted him with:
"No! You will not!
Mahārāja!
Do not give in to paralysing grief.

29 *Prabhu*! Lord!
I will repeat what I said earlier.
Fate is doing all this.
In this world,
creatures are born,
they meet, and they part –

30 Like bubbles on an ocean,
bobbing and blending
and disappearing.
Congregations uncongregate,
what rises high
will fall down,

31 Union ends in separation,
and life ends in death.
Sweet doing nothing brings misery,
bitter hard labour brings happiness.
What matters is not idleness
but *śrī*-prosperity,
hlī-humility, *bhūti*-confidence,
dhṛti-patience, and *kīrti*-fame.

32 Friends do not make you happy,
enemies do not make you suffer.
Your subjects do not make you rich,
and being rich does not bring happiness.

33 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
O king!
Do what the Creator
created you for.
That is what will fulfil
your life.
You cannot run away
from responsibility."

SECTION TWENTY-EIGHT

1 Seeing the eldest Pāṇḍava brother
plunged in despair over his dead kinsmen
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
Vyāsa consoled suicidal Yudhiṣṭhira:

2 O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
Let me tell you a story out of history
in this connection
known as the Aśmā-gīta.

3 This is about king Janaka
of Videha
who in his deepest despair
decided to go
to a wise Brahmin named Aśmā
for advice.

4 Janaka said to him: "Tell me,
what is best
for a man to do
when he gains friends and wealth,
and also when he loses
friends and wealth?"

5 Aśmā replied:
"The instant you are born,
that very instant
joys and sorrows
attach themselves
to your body.

6 One or the other takes over,
which means
either joy or sorrow take hold
of a person's thoughts
like a strong wind pushing
a crowd of clouds.

7 And then he starts thinking,
'I am high-born,
I am successful,
I am no ordinary man.'
These feelings, all three of them,
drench his ego.

8 And so he starts living off
and squandering
his ancestral inheritance and,
when that is gone,
he's perfectly happy living off
the wealth of others.

9 That's when a rājā has to step in
and use punishment
to stop this man
from violating law and tradition,
like a hunter using arrows
to block marauding beasts.

10 If, O earth-lord,
at the age of twenty or thirty,
a man starts thieving like this,
you cannot expect him
to reach the ripe old age
of a hundred.

11 A ruler has to have insight
into human psychology,
for that is the way he can help
to remove the sufferings
of the distressed
and exploitation of the deprived.

12 Repeated mental suffering
is caused
by either confused thinking
or unexpected calamity.
There is
no third cause.

13 These two are the root
of the multitude
of human sorrows.
And getting attached
to material things
is a related cause.

14 As for old age and death –
they are two wolves,
they busily devour
all creatures,
strong or weak,
big or small.

15 He may be the lord
of the whole sea-girdled world,
but where will you find
the wonderful man
who can escape old age
and death?

16 How can you escape the human condition?
Joy and sorrow
are the stuff of life.
There is no way
you can run away –
You have to face them.

17 O lord of men! What we want,
we never get.
Instead, what we get
in youth, middle-age and old age
are problems
and more problems.

18 What fate has planned for us
is absence of the agreeable,
and presence
of the disagreeable,
gain and loss,
and joy and sorrow.

19 It is all in the hands
of fate –
getting on in life and living,
leaving the body
and dying,
succeeding and failing.

20 As simple and as natural
as sound,
touch, shape, rasa, smell,
are joy and sorrow
which fate has prescribed
for the human condition.

21 And so Cosmic Time Kāla
at the right time
supplies us with everything:
sitting and sleeping,
eating and drinking,
coming and going.

22 How marvellously marvellous
is topsy-turvy Kāla!
Doctors fall ill,
the strong become weak,
the rich turn poor.
Marvellous!

23 High birth, valour,
good health, good looks,
all the good things
we enjoy –
it's our good luck
they come to us.

24 Poverty-stricken,
he has a brood of children;
Rolling in wealth,
and he's childless.
Wonderful! Wonderful the ways
of Vidhātā the Creator!

25 Disease, fire, water, weapons,
hunger, thirst,
affliction, poison, fever,
falling from heights –
these are so many ways
a man can die.

26 The moment he is born,
destiny decides
the way he will die.
We travel the path
it has been decided for us
to travel.

27 No one has escaped before,
no one escapes now.
A rich man dies in the flush of youth,
a poor man
lives in excruciating misery
for a hundred years.

28 He is born literally with nothing,
yet he is blessed with long life.
Another is born
in the lap of luxury,
and he dies
like a one-day worm.

29 Rich, but without appetite,
and what he eats,
poor man, he can't digest.
Another is poor,
and he finds a meal of tree-bark
utterly delicious.

30 An ill-ātmaned scoundrel,
impelled by Kāla,
says, "I can do what I like,"
and merrily, unpunished,
perpetrates every kind of crime
and mischief.

31 The learned condemn hunting,
gambling, drinking
and womanishing, but you see
so many people
wise in the scriptures addicted
to these vices.

32 Want them or don't want them,
like it or not,
Kāla will bring you things,
because that is the way of Kāla.
The unforeseen and the unexpected
will happen.

33 Wind, *ākāśa*-space, fire,
moon, sun,
day, night, planets, rivers,
and mountains –
who made them,
who sustains them?

34 O bull-brave hero!
It is Kāla
behind heat and cold,
and the rainy season.
And that is true too
of joy and sorrow.

35 When old age comes,
and death stares you
in the face,
no amount of medicines and mantras
and sacred fires and *japa*-chanting
can save you.

36 We meet briefly,
and we part,
like two logs of wood
floating on the ocean,
meeting, briefly touching,
and parting.

37 Kāla could not care less.
Kāla looks coolly
on the enjoyer of girls singing
and music playing,
and the wretched beggar
scrounging for a morsel.

38 Thousands of fathers and mothers
in this world,
thousands of sons and thousands
of wives –
whose fathers and mothers,
whose sons and wives?

39 No one is anyone's, no one
belongs to anyone but oneself.
Wife, and relative,
and friend –
all travellers, all passers-by
on the road of life.

40 So think, and ask yourself:
'Where am I?
Where am I going? Who am I?
What have I come here for?
What and who
should I grieve for?'

41 The wheel of saṁsāra
is a never-ceasing cakra.
Whoever you love, will leave you.
Brother, mother, father,
loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend –
all travellers, passers-by.

42 It cannot be seen,
the world beyond this world,
but the wise say they see it.
It is prudent to have *śraddhā*
for the sacred texts,
instead of disregarding them.

43 The learned should respect *pitṛs*
and the gods,
perform yajñas, practise dharma,
and observe
the threefold ideal
of dharma-artha-and-kāma.

44 No one has plumbed the mystery
of the ocean
of Cosmic Time Kāla,
in whose profound depths
lurk the twin mahā-sharks
of old age and death.

45 They are proficient in Āyurveda,
the Science of Life,
ye even physicians
and their families
can be seen falling prey
to wasting diseases.

46 Drugs and liquids are of no use to them:
they are trapped like the shore-surrounded ocean.

47 Chemical prescriptions fail; they are felled
by old age like trees trampled by elephants.

48 Old age and death spare none – not even those
with tapasyā, learning, dedication, gifts, yajñas.

49 Days and nights, months and years,
and seasons after seasons come and go,
they come and go in the lives of creatures,
and once they go, they never return.

50 This is the road of Kāla that you call Life.
This is the road no embodied creature can avoid.

51 Whether body's born of *jīva*-spirit, or *jīva* of body,
wife or relative or friend – all are passers-by.

52 No one is yours forever. Your body is not yours.
If you are not yours, how can others be yours?

53 Where is your father today, O blameless rājā?
Your grandfather? You cannot see him, nor he you.

54 You cannot see heaven, you cannot see hell.
A good man sees with the eyes of the sacred texts.

55 Practise brahmacarya; have children.
Purify your senses; see with clear vision.
Be free of heaven, be free of this world.
Cast off the cares that afflict the heart
and devote yourself to the supreme goal.

56 The king who takes his share of wealth
as ordained by dharma, and rules justly,
is acclaimed by the world's moving and unmoving life."

57 Janaka the rājā of Videha heard
these words of wisdom from the lips of Aśmā;
freed from despair, he returned to his palace.

58 O never-failing equal-to-Śakra-Indra Yudhiṣṭhira!
Cast off despair. Listen to me.
Rejoice! Follow Kṣatriya dharma! Enjoy the world!

SECTION TWENTY-NINE

1 Seeing Indra-among-rājās
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira silent (said Vaiśampāyana),
Pāṇḍa's son Guḍākeśa-Arjuna
turned to Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna and said:

2 "O Mādhava-Krishna! This scorcher of foes,
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira, is paralysed
with grief for the deaths of his relatives.
Rescue him from his ocean of despair.

3 O mahā-muscled exterminator-of-people
Janārdana-Krishna!
All of us are beset again
with doubts and misgivings.
I beg of you,
lift us out of this fearful grief."

4 This plea of mahā-ātmaned Vijaya-Arjuna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
could not be ignored by lotus-eyed
Puṇḍarikākṣa-Acyuta-Govinda Krishna,
who turned and faced
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

5 Impossible for Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
for any reason
to turn down Keśava-Krishna;
from his boyhood
Yudhiṣṭhira had loved Govinda-Krishna
more than he loved Arjuna.

6 Mahā-muscled Śauri-Krishna
caressed the stone-hard arm of Yudhiṣṭhira,
which was anointed
with sandalpaste,
and began
speaking to him.

7 With its enchanting eyes
and lovely teeth,
the face of Krishna glowed
like a full-blown lotus
in the lambent light
of early dawn.

8 Vāsudeva-Krishna said:
O tiger-among-men!
Why this useless, emaciating grief?
There is no way
it will bring back to you
the dead warriors.

9 Like wealth in a dream,
vanishing on waking,
all these Kṣatriyas have vanished
in the mahā-battle.
They are gone forwever,
never to return.

10 These heroes met their foes,
face to face,
and they fell on the field.
Not one lies there
with battle-wounds
on his back.

11 Each has surrendered
his *prāṇa* life-breath
and, sanctified by war-weapon death,
gone to heaven.
Is this a reason for you
to grieve?

12 Inspired by Kṣatriya-dharma,
these brave heroes,
learned in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
have attained the goal
reserved for the virtuous.
You should not grieve

13 After you have listened
to the noble lives
of dedicated lords of the earth.
In this connection
is cited as example the ancient story,
the history

14 Of what Nārada said to Sṛñjaya,
dazed with grief
over the death of his son:
"O Sṛñjaya!
I, you, all your subjects . . .
joy and sorrow

15 Have trapped us all.
Die we all must.
How will grieving help us?
Listen to the stories
I tell you of mahā-fortune-favoured rājās
of the past.

16 Listen carefully, O king!
 And see if this
does not remove your sorrow.
 Listen to the lives
of these mahā-glorious dead lords
 of the earth,

17 Which I will narrate in detail,
 and then see
if your burning grief
 is not calmed.
Malignant stars are pacified,
 one's life-span increased,

18 By listening to the enchanting lives
 of these rulers
of the ancient past.
 Sṛñjaya! I have heard
of the death of Marutta,
 son of Avikṣit.

19 That mahātmā rājā Marutta performed
 the all-wealth-gifting
Viśva-ṣrja yajña
 to which came Indra and Varuṇa
and all the gods
 headed by Bṛhaspati.

20 Now, Marutta had challenged
 and defeated the rājā of the gods
Puraṁdara-Śakra-Indra.
 Learned Bṛhaspati,
who liked Indra, refused to officiate
 at Marutta's yajña;

21 Bṛhaspati's younger brother Saṁvarta
 substituted.
In Marutta's reign, without tilling
 the earth gave harvests,
and the kingdom, O excellent rājā,
 was glory-garlanded.

22 At mahā-ātmaned Marutta's yajña,
the Viśva-devas
were the sabhā members,
and the Maruts and Sādhyas
were busy preparing and serving food
and distributing gifts.

23 In Marutta's yajña,
the Maruts drank soma wine,
and the *dakṣiṇā*-gifts surpassed
anything given
by gods and humans
and gandharvas.

24 Marutta excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma, knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

25 There was another king, Sṛñjaya,
named Suhotra,
renowned for honouring guests.
He died too.
Maghavat-Indra rained gold on his kingdom
for one whole year.

26 With Suhotra as her ruling lord,
the earth literally
became Vasumatī,
the Lady Blessed with Riches.
The waters of the rivers
overflowed with gold.

27 O rājā! And Maghavat-Indra,
pūjā-respected by the worlds,
saw to it that the rivers
were filled
with countless golden tortoises,
crabs, fish and *makara*-crocodiles.

28 Seeing hundreds of thousands
of golden fish,
tortoises, crabs and *makaras*
adorning his kingdom,
guest-honouring rājā Suhotra
was agog with wonder.

29 Gathering that incalculable wealth,
which transformed Kurujāṅgala
into a golden kingdom,
Suhotra performed a yajña,
distributing all the gold
to Brahmins.

30 Suhotra excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma, knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

31 O Sṛñjaya! Son of Śveta!
Your son never performed a yajña,
never distributed dakṣiṇās.
Be calm. Stop grieving.
I have heard, Sṛñjaya, Bṛhadratha
of Aṅga died also.

32 Ten lakhs of pure-white horses
he gave away,
along with ten lakhs
of young girls
all adorned
with golden ornaments,

33 At the magnificent yajña
that he performed,
where these were the *dakṣiṇās*.
Not only that,
a hundred thousand elephants
with lotus-garlands

34 Were distributed by him as *dakṣiṇā*
at that yajña.
In addition to that,
a full crore
of bulls,
all golden-garlanded,

35 And cows, with thousands
of keepers of bulls and cows
were given as *dakṣiṇā*.
While the Aṅga-ruler
was performing this yajña
on Viṣṇupada hill,

36 Indra got drunk on soma-wine,
and the Brahmins
were exhilarated with the *dakṣiṇā*.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Hundreds of such yajñas
were performed in the past

37 By this king, and the *dakṣiṇās* distributed
surpassed anything
given by gods, humans
and gandharvas.
None born, none to be born,
will ever give such wealth

38 As was given at the seven soma-yajñas:
Agniṣṭoma, Atyagniṣṭoma, Ukthya,
Śoḍaśī, Vājapeya, Atirātra, Aptoryāma.
Bṛhadratha excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge
and detachment and affluence;

39 He excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?
I have heard, Sṛñjaya,
that Uśīnara's son Śibi
also died –

40 The same king who swung the earth
with his hand
as one swings a leather shield.
The earth resounded
with the mahā-roar
of his furiously speeding chariot.

41 He subjugated the entire world
with the power
of a single-umbrella-ed chariot.
Take all
the wild beasts and cows and bulls
of this earth –

42 Uśīnara's son Śibi gave away
more than that number of cows
at his yajña.
Prajāpati Brahmā himself
did not think
there was anyone,

43 In the past,
or would be in the future,
among all the rājās, his equal,
O Sṛñjaya.
In fame and valour, Śibi was the equal
of Indra himself.

44 Your son never performed,
never distributed *dakṣiṇās.*
Why do you grieve for him?
Śibi excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge
and detachment and affluence.
He excelled your son
in purity and virtue.
Yet he too had to die.
Why are you grieving?

45 We have also heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of enormously wealthy mahā-ātmaned Bharata,
son of Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā.
He also could not escape death.

46 Offering three hundred horses to the gods
on the banks of the Yamunā,
twenty on the banks of the Sarasvatī,
and fourteen on the banks of the Gaṅgā,

47 Duṣyanta's mahā-radiant son Bharata
in the past
performed
a thousand Aśvamedha yajñas.
and a hundred
Rājasūya yajñas.

48 No human can swim in the sky
with his arms;
similarly, no rājā
in this world
can equal the mahā-glorious karma
of Bharata.

49 Offering more than a thousand horses,
he ordered *vedī*-altars
constructed for the Horse Sacrifice
To Kaṇva
Bharata gave away
incalculable *padma*-wealth.

50 Bharata excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma, knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

51 We have also heard, Sṛñjaya,
of Rāma,
Daśaratha's son,
who loved his subjects
as if they were his own children.
He too had to die.

52 No one helpless in his kingdom,
no widows either.
In Rāma-rājya,
the ruler looked upon his people
as a father
on his children.

53 Timely did the clouds
bring rain,
timely the rich harvests.
No one was hungry;
timely and just
was the punishment.

54 No one died by drowning,
no one perished in fire.
No one
feared disease
in the period
of Rāma-rājya.

55 All lived to be a thousand,
all had a thousand children.
Free of disease,
all lived fulfilled lives
in the period
of Rāma-rājya.

56 Women never bickered
or quarrelled,
let alone men.
All followed dharma
in the period
of Rāma-rājya.

57 Contented,
fulfilled,
fearless and free,
were all
in the period
of Rāma-rājya.

58 Trees were full
of flowers and fruits,
no mishaps occurred,
cows gave *dronas* of milk
in the period
of Rāma-rājya.

59 After fourteen years of forest-exile,
Rāma of mahā-tapasyā
performed ten praise-deserving
Aśvamedha-yajñas
which were open to all
without restriction.

60 Youthful-looking, dark-skinned Rāma
looked like the head
of an elephant herd –
handsome, with pink-rimmed eyes,
lion-shouldered,
and long arms reaching to his knees.

61 As the lord of Ayodhyā,
Rāma ruled
his kingdom,
and the period
of Rāma-rājya lasted
for eleven thousand years.

62 Rāma excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

63 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of rājā Bhagīratha who also died.
At his yajña,
Indra drank soma,
and so energised was he
by the wine

64 That that lord of the gods,
Pāka-exterminating
Bhagavān Pākaśāsana-Indra,
with the valour of his arms,
annihilated
thousands of antigods.

65 And in just one of his yajñas,
Bhagīratha gave away,
as part of the *dakṣiṇā,*
ten hundred thousand young girls
glittering
with golden ornaments.

66 Each girl was ensconced
in a four-horsed chariot.
Accompanying each chariot
were a hundred
of the finest
gold-garlanded elephants.

67 Accompanying each elephant
were a thousand horses,
accompanying each horse
were a thousand cows,
and accompanying each cow
were a thousand goats and sheep.

68 Because she flowed down and nestled
in Bhagīratha's lap
in the distant past,
the river Gaṅgā was known as Bhāgīrathī,
or Urvaśī,
the One who Reposes in the Lap.

69 Three-world-flowing Trilokapathagā Gaṅgā
revered,
as her father,
rājā Bhagīratha of the race of Ikṣvāku
who performed yajñas
with lavish *dakṣiṇā*-gifts.

70 Bhagīratha excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

71 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of mahā-ātmaned Dilīpa,
who also died.
His glorious karma is the theme
of narratives sung in his praise
by the twice-born.

72 That lord of the earth,
with single-minded purpose,
at a mahā-yajña,
gave away to Brahmins
all the world's wealth
that he had.

73 Performer-of-yajñas Dilīpa,
in each yajña,
gave to the purohita
as *dakṣiṇā*
one thousand elephants
made of gold.

74 The sacrificial *yūpa*-stake
in his yajñas
was a marvel of pure gold.
Śakra-Indra and
the dutiful gods took shelter
under this king.

75 In the enclosure that surrounded
the golden stake
six thousand gods
and gandharvas
danced;
and the seven notes

76 Of the musical scale
were played on the vīṇā
by Viśvāvasu himself,
and each living being
felt Viśvāvasu was playing
exclusively for him.

77 No rājā could equal the glory
of rājā Dilīpa.
His gold-caparisoned
and gold-ornamented elephants
were seen to lie down
in public places.

78 Merely to catch a glimpse
of truth-speaking,
hundred-bow-bending-strong
mahā-ātmaned rājā Dilipa
was like obtaining
a vision of heaven.

79 In the palace of Dilīpa,
these three sounds never ceased:
chanting of the Vedas,
twanging of bowstrings,
and shouts
of "Give! Give freely!"

80 Dilīpa excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

81 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of Yuvanāśva's son Māndhātā
who also died.
He was born
when the Maruts pulled him out
from his father's rib.

[XII:29:82-87]

Transcreated by P. Lal

82 King Māndhātā was conceived
in the stomach
of Śrīmān mahā-ātmaned Yuvanāśva,
the three-world-conqueror,
who mistakenly drank the curd-and-ghee
pṛṣadājya-mixture.

83 Seeing that god-like baby
radiant in the lap of his father,
the gods whispered
among themselves,
"On whose milk will this baby
be weaned?"

84 Indra said, "*Māṁ dhātā*:
I will wet-nurse him.
Because Śatakratu-Indra
of a hundred sacrifices promised this,
the child
came to be called Māndhātā.

85 To feed the mahā-ātmaned son
of Yuvanāśva,
a stream of milk issued
from the finger of Indra,
which he slipped
inside the baby's mouth.

86 Nourished by the milk streaming
from Indra's finger,
in a single day the baby looked
a hundred days' old,
and in twelve days he became
a strapping twelve-year old.

87 A mahā-ātmaned dharmātmā,
the equal in valour
of Indra himself,
one day Māndhātā became
the undisputed monarch
of the entire world.

88 On the battlefield
he defeated
king Aṅgāra, Marutta,
Asita, Gaya,
and Bṛhadratha
the ruler of Aṅga.

89 In the battle he fought
with Aṅgāra,
the gods said among themselves,
"The twang
of Yauvanāśva-Mandhātā's bowstring
shatters the sky."

90 The entire territory from where
the sun rises
to where the sun sets
became famous
as the region belonging
to Yuvanāśva's son Māndhātā.

91 He performed a hundred Aśvamedhas
and a hundred Rājasūyas
and at these yajñas
he distributed to Brahmins,
O lord of the world,
countless *rohita* fishes.

92 Each fish was ten yajñas long
and one *yojana* wide.
What remained after the Brahmins
had had their fill,
was distributed among others
who were present.

93 Māndhātā excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

94 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of Nahuṣa's son Yayāti,
who also died.
After conquering
this entire
sea-girdled earth,

95 He erected a series of *vedī*-altars
in sites measured
by throws of a *śamyā*-stick.
Performing yajñas there,
he covered the length and breadth
of his prosperous kingdom.

96 With a hundred *kratu*-yajñas
and a hundred Vājapeya yajñas
he gratified
all the Indras.
among-Brahmins with three hills
of pure gold.

97 Slaughtering
the Daitya and Dānava antigods
ranged in battle-formation
against him,
Nahuṣa's son bequeathed the earth
to his sons.

98 Bequeathing the fringes to Yadu,
Druhyu and Anu,
he installed his youngest son Puru
on the throne,
and retired to forest-seclusion
with his wires.

99 Yayāti excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

100 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of his dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

101 Such was the rājā's reverence
for Brahmins
that he had ten lakh kings
serve them in yajñas –
kings who themselves had performed
ten thousand yajñas each.

102 And the *dakṣiṇā*-pleased Brahmins
sang the praises
of Nābhāga's son Ambarīṣa,
saying,
"No king was like him in the past,
no king will ever be."

103 The one hundred and ten thousand kings
who served the Brahmins
received the fruits
of the Aśmavedha yajña
and went to the heavenly realm
beyond the *dakṣiṇāyana* path.

104 Ambarīṣa excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

105 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of Citraratha's son Śaśabindu,
who also died.
That mahā-ātmaned monarch
had a hundred
thousand wives,

106 And they bore him
ten hundred thousand sons,
each of whom dressed
in golden armour
and was
an incomparable bowman.

107 Each prince
married a hundred girls.
A hundred elephants
accompanied each girl,
and each elephant came
with a hundred chariots.

108 Each chariot came
with a hundred pedigreed horses,
each horse came
with a hundred cows,
each cow with a hundred
goats and sheep.

109 All this fabulous wealth
was given away
to Brahmins
by mahārāja Śaśabindu,
when he performed
a mahā-Aśvamedha yajña.

110 Śaśabindu excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

111 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of Amūrtaraya's son Gaya,
who also died.
For a hundred years,
rājā Gaya subsisted only
on leftover yajña food.

112 When asked by the fire god
what boon he desired,
Gaya replied:
"The wealth I give away –
make it inexhaustible.
May śraddhā deepen my dharma.

113 Be gracious to me:
grant that my mind
delight always in the truth."
We have heard
that the purifying fire Pāvaka
granted his wishes.

114 For a thousand years,
Gaya performed
the new moon Darśa,
the full moon Paurṇamāsa,
the four-monthly Cāturmāsya,
and Aśvamedha yajñas.

115 For a thousand years,
he rose early every morning
and gave away
as yajña-gifts
one hundred thousand cows
and one hundred thousand mules.

116 O bull-brave hero!
He pleased the gods with *soma*,
the Brahmins with wealth,
the *pitṛs*
with *svadhā*-libations,
and his wives with kāma.

117 At his mahā-Horse Sacrifice,
rājā Gaya gave as *dakṣiṇā*
a specially crafted
golden globe
fifty arm's-lengths broad
and a hundred long.

118 O bull-brave rājā!
Amūrtaraya's son
gave away
as many cows
as there are gains of sand
in the Gaṅgā.

119 Gaya excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

120 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of Saṁkṛti's son Rantideva,
who also died.
Propitiating Śakra-Indra,
that king of mahā-tapasyā
received a boon

121 To the effect that endless
would be his food supply,
liberal his hospitality
to guests,
never-failing be his *śraddhā*,
and never he in need from anyone.

122 Wild and domestic animals
came by themselves
to be sacrificed at the yajñas
of strict-vowed,
mahā-ātmaned,
illustrious rājā Rantideva.

123 From the skins of sacrificed animals
flowed secretions
in such abundance
that they became
the celebrated mahā-river
skin-flowing Carmanvatī.

124 The king used to give away
gold coins
at his yajña.
The twice-born would shout:
"Brahmins! Gold coins for you!
Niṣka-gold coins!"

125 No one responded.
But when told, "A thousand gold coins!"
all the Brahmins rushed forward.
All the wealth offered
in the sacred
Ānvāhārya-fire –

126 The jugs, pots, plates, cups
and other utensils
in which libations were made
at the yajña
of learned Rantideva –
were of pure gold.

127 On the nights when guests
were staying
in the palace of Rantideva,
twenty thousand
and one hundred cows
were slaughtered.

128 And the ear-ringed cooks
moved about shouting:
"Plenty of soup today!
Eat your fill!
But not as much meat today
as before!"

129 Rantideva excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

130 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of tiger-among-men
mahā-ātmaned Sagara,
who also died.
His valour and prowess
were superhuman.

131 Like so many stars clustering
around the sky-rājā moon
on a clear after-monsoon
autumn night,
sixty thousand sons accompanied
their father Sagara.

132 The earth came under the sway
of the single royal umbrella
of this monarch,
who gratified the gods
by performing
a thousand Aśvamedhas.

133 Once, in a fit of anger,
he ordered
the whole earth excavated.
Water flooded in,
and so the ocean is called "Sāgara",
after him.

134 Not just golden pillars,
but palaces
made entirely of gold,
with lovely lotus-eyed girls
inside them on luxurious beds,
he gave away

135 To the deserving twice-born,
along with
huge quantities
of other desirable wealth,
which the Brahmins divided
among themselves.

136 Sagara excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

137 We have heard, O Sṛñjaya,
of Vena's son Pṛthu,
who also died.
Mahā-ṛṣis gathered
in a mahā-forest
to anoint him monarch.

138 He was given the title "Pṛtha"
the Promoter,
because he promoted
the progress of mankind,
and "Kṣatriya" the Sorrow-Remover
because he healed their *kṣata*-sorrows.

139 Seeing Vena's son Pṛtha,
people said, "We love him."
Because they had this
anurāga-love
for him,
he was given the title "rājā".

140 During the reign of Pṛtha,
the earth, untilled,
gave harvests,
every tree spilled out honey,
and every cow gave
a full *droṇa* of milk.

141 Free from disease and illness,
their every wish fulfilled,
without any fear
of any kind,
his subjects thrived happily
in village and city.

142 When Pṛthu travelled,
the waters of the ocean
became calm,
river-waters rippled gently,
and the flag on this chariot
fluttered freely.

143 At one of his mahā-lavish
Aśvamedha-yajñas,
rājā Pṛthu gave to Brahmins
twentyone hills
made of gold,
each four hundred arm's-lengths high.

144 Pṛthu excelled you, Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence;
he excelled your son in purity and virtue.
Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

145 Why are you brooding in silence,
O rājā Sṛñjaya?
Have you heard what I said?
Or is it all wasted,
like the best of medicines
on a dying man?

146 Sṛñjaya replied:
"I have been listening, Nārada,
to your words,
wonderful words,
as sweet as a scented garland,
grief-dispelling words
about the inspiring lives
of pure-deed-doing
mahā-ātmaned rājā-ṛṣis.

147 O mahā-ṛṣi Nārada!
Wasted it has not been,
all that you have spoken,
I have seen you.
My grief is gone.
I have drunk nectar,
and I yearn for more!
O Brahman-eloquent ṛṣi!
Favour me with more!

148 *Vibho!* O radiant one!
Infallible is your darshan!
I am burning with grief
for the death of my son.
Make me the recipient
of your grace!
Favour me.
Bring my son back to me."

149 Nārada replied:
Your son Suvarṇaṣṭhīvī,
who was given to you
by Parvata ṛṣi,
is no more here.
I will give you
another son Hiraṇyanābha,
who will live for a thousand years.

SECTION THIRTY

1 Yudhiṣṭhira asked:
"Why did Parvata grant Sṛñjaya
his son Kāñcanaṣṭhīvī-Suvarṇaṣṭhīvī?
Why did he die?

2 And why did Sṛñjaya's son
die in his infancy
when the life-span of all in those days
was one thousand years?

3 And how did he come to be named
Suvarṇaṣṭhīvī?
Was there any special reason
for naming him
Kāñcanaṣṭhīvī?
Explain all this to me."

4 Lord-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
(replied Krishna)
This is what happened.
Nārada and Parvata
were two of the world's
finest ṛṣis.

5 Nārada was the maternal uncle,
Parvata the son
of Nārada's sister.
Leaving heaven,
both happily journeyed
to the human world.

6 They relished the sacred leftovers
of yajñas
and other food
offered to the gods.
Eminently gratified
were uncle and nephew.

7 And so these two travelled
the world over,
going wherever they pleased,
and tasting
the varied delights of food
enjoyed by mortals.

8 Cheerfully they roamed about,
pledging to each other
that whatever each experienced,
good or bad,
he would disclose to the other;
failing which,

9 The curse of being a liar
would be his punishment.
Both mahā-ṛṣis,
pūjā-respected by the world,
said,
"So be it."

10 They went to Śveta's son
rājā Sṛñjaya,
and said to him:
"For your good,
we will stay with you
for some time.

11 O lord of the world!
Be so good
as to meet all our needs."
"So be it,"
replied the rājā,
receiving them with reverence.

12 One day, rājā Sṛñjaya,
very affectionately,
said to the rich-in-tapasyā
mahātmā ṛṣis:
"I have a daughter,
lovely-complexioned –

13 My only daughter,
a young girl,
beautiful, faultless-figured,
well-mannered, gentle;
in every way
she will serve you;

14 A virgin named Sukumārī,
as fragrant
as the pollen of a lotus."
"Very well," they said.
Then the rājā
instructed her:

15 "Serve these two Brahmins,
my daughter,
as you would gods and *pitṛs*."
The dharma-dedicated girl
said to her father,
"Whatever you say."

16 Following the advice of the rājā,
she started
serving the two ṛṣis.
Her beauty
and her dedication to him
were such

17 That they inspired feelings
of love for her
in Nārada.
Kāma slowly
took over the heart
of mahātmā Nārada

18 Like radiance waxing
in the moon
during the bright fortnight.
But to Parvata, his nephew,
mahātmā Nārada
said not a word.

19 Nārada was learned in dharma,
and the feelings in his heart
embarrassed him.
Parvata's tapasyā
and the uneasiness of Nārada
made Parvata

20 See through the secret kāma
of Nārada,
and he cursed Nārada, saying:
"We agreed voluntarily
that we would reveal
to each other

21 Whatever we experienced,
good or bad,
holding back nothing.
You have broken
your word,
you have violated trust.

22 That is why, Brahmin,
I am forced
to curse you.
The moment kāma
stirred inside
your heart

23 For Sukumārī, you should have told me.
You did not.
So I curse you.
You are a brahmacārī, my guru,
a man of tapasyā,
a Brahmin –

24 What made you break
the pledge
that bound us both?
You leave me no choice.
I am angry. I curse you!
Listen:

25 Sukumārī will be your wife;
indeed, she will.
But after you marry her,
prabhu-lord,
you will appear to her
like a *vānara*-monkey.

26 To all who see you,
you will look
like a *vānara*-monkey."
Hearing these words
made Nārada furious
with Parvata;

27 Enraged uncle
counter-cursed nephew,
saying: "All your tapasyā,
all your brahmacarya,
all your love of truth,
all your self-discipline,

28 All you dedication to dharma
will not take you to heaven!"
And so,
competing
and bitterly casting curses
at each other,

29 Like two musth elephants,
they went
their separate ways.
And mahā-minded Parvata
wandered
all over the earth,

30 Receiving everyone's pūjā-respect
wherever he went,
for he was a radiant personality.
And Nārada,
O Bharata descendant,
obtained Sṛñjaya's daughter

31 Sukumārī, who became
the blameless wife
of this finest of twice-born Brahmins.
But to Sukumārī
the celestial ṛṣi Nārada resembled
a *vānara*-monkey.

32 Such was the power
of the curse
that whenever the girl
looked at Nārada,
she saw a monkey,
marriage mantras notwithstanding.

33 But she did not disrespect him.
Indeed, her love for him
kept growing.
She devoted
her heart entirely
to her husband,

34 Never getting attracted
even to a god,
or a muni, or a yakṣa.
One day,
in the course of his wanderings,
bhagavān Parvata

35 Found himself in the middle
of a secluded forest,
where he chanced upon Nārada.
Greeting Nārada
with the deepest respect,
Parvata said:

36 "*Prabhu*! Lord! Be gracious.
Show me the way
to go to heaven."
Nārada saw Parvata
in front of him
say this,

37 Very humbly,
his palms joined in *añjali*;
and Nārada, even more humbly,
said: "It was you who cursed me first,
saying,
'Be a vānara!'

38 Which made me lose my temper,
and I cursed you back,
saying,
'From this day,
you will never find your way
to heaven!'

39 You should not have done
what you did.
You are like a son to me."
The two munis
freed themselves
from their mutual curses.

40 Sukumārī saw Nārada
dazzlingly radiant like a god,
she fled,
thinking she was looking
at someone
other than her husband.

41 Seeing the blameless girl
running away,
Parvata shouted:
"He is your husband!
Why are you running away?
Come back!

42 This is *bhagavān* Nārada,
the supreme dharmātmā,
the celestial ṛṣi,
your lord,
your heart's desire.
The very same!"

43 Very carefully and persuasively,
Parvata convinced her
about what had transpired.
Reassured by the mahātmā,
Sukumārī regained
her peace of mind.

44 Parvata returned to heaven,
Nārada to his home.
O finest of men! (Vāsudeva-Krishna added)
Since Nārada is involved in all this,
ask him –
he will tell you everything.

SECTION THIRTY-ONE

1 Pāṇḍu's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
said to Nārada:
"*Bhagavan*, revered one, tell me all
about the birth of Suvarṇaṣṭhīvī,
the Gold-Spitter."

2 Requested by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
muni Narāda
narrated the story
of the birth of Suvarṇaṣṭhīvī,

3 O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
(said Nārada)
Everything happened
as Keśava-Krishna just said.
Let me give you
the rest of the story.

4 I and my nephew,
mahā-muni Parvata,
once went to stay
with that finest
of victorious kings –
Sṛñjaya.

5 He received us
with deep pūjā-respect.
We stayed in his palace,
and he arranged
to satisfy
our every possible desire.

6 When the rainy season ended,
and it was time for us
to depart,
Parvata said to me
very seriously,
as the occasion demanded:

7 "We have been for long
pūjā-respected guests
in the palace
of this Indra-among-men.
Should we not give him something
in return?"

8 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
I said
to my auspicious-to-look-at nephew
Parvata,
"Radiant one!
What you say becomes you.

9 We should please the rājā
by giving him boons,
whatever he desires.
If you like,
we can use our tapasyā
for this purpose."

10 O bull-brave Kaurava!
Acting on this,
Parvata called the finest
of victorious rājās,
king Sṛñjaya,
and said to him:

11 "Your gracious hospitality, O king,
has pleased us.
O finest of excellent men!
We would like you
to ask from us anything
you desire.

12 Mahārāja!
You deserve our pūjā-respect.
Ask from us anything,
but see
that it does not involve harming gods
nor destroying humans."

13 "If you are pleased with me,"
replied Sṛñjaya,
"enough! I want nothing else.
All my desires
are amply fulfilled
if you are happy."

14 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
To Sṛñjaya who said this,
Parvata replied:
"Ask that one wish
which your heart
has for long cherished."

15 Sṛñjaya said: "In that case,
I would like a son brave,
heroic, strict-vowed,
long-lived,
mahā-fortune-favoured,
and equal to Deva-rājā Indra."

16 "Your wish shall be fulfilled,"
said Parvata,
"but he will not be long-lived
because you have dared
in your heart to surpass
even Deva-rāja Indra.

17 Your son will be known
as Suvarṇaṣṭhīvī.
He will be like the rājā of the gods,
but see
that you protect him
from the rājā of the gods."

18 After he received this boon
from mahatma Parvata,
apprehensive Sṛñjaya
tried to placate him,
saying: "No,
not like this.

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19 I want long life for my son,
O muni.
Your tapasyā can grant this."
But Parvata
kept thinking of Indra,
and kept silent.

20 I noticed the disappointment
of the king.
I said: "When in trouble,
mahārāja, think of me.
I will restore your son
to you.

21 Do not grieve.
O lord of the earth!
When the *preta*-rājā Death
claims your son,
I will return him to you
in his bodily form."

22 Having said this to the king,
both of them
went to their respective homes,
and Sṛñjaya
also returned
to his *mandira*-palace.

23 In course of time
a son was born
to the rāja-ṛṣi Sṛñjaya,
a mahā-valiant boy
who dazzled
with prowess and energy.

24 He grew up as glorious
as a mahā-lotus in a lake.
Because he spat (*ṣṭhīvī*)
gold (*kāñcana*),
he came to be called
Kāñcanaṣṭhīvī.

25 O most excellent Kaurava!
News of this wonder
spread everywhere.
Devendra-Indra
knew of the boy's birth
by mahā-ṛṣi Parvata's boon.

26 Fearing he would be overthrown,
Vala-and-Vṛtra-slayer Indra
obtained Bṛhaspati's permission
and started
looking for an opportunity
to kill the prince.

27 To his celestial Thunderbolt missile
which appeared
before him in personified form,
O lord Yudhiṣṭhira,
he said: "Go, become a tiger,
and devour the prince!

28 Parvata has predicted
that when this boy of Sṛñjaya
grows to be a man,
his valour
will be such
that he will ruin me."

29 Obliterator-of-hostile-cities,
that Thunderbolt of Indra,
heeding the command,
began prowling
around the boy-prince,
seeking to kill him.

30 As for Sṛñjaya, he was overjoyed
because his son
resembled Deva-rāja Indra himself;
taking with him
his wives from the inner apartments,
he retired to a forest.

31 In that unpeopled forest one day,
on the bank
of the Bhāgīrathī,
the boy-prince,
accompanied by his nurse,
was playing games;

32 He was barely five years old,
but he possessed
the strength of an elephant.
All of a sudden,
he found himself face to face
with a tiger.

33 The tiger pounced on him.
Trembling with fear,
he fell on the ground,
and died on the spot.
The nurse saw this happen,
and started screaming.

34 After killing the prince,
the tiger vanished.
It was all a device
of the māyā-magic
of the rājā of the gods
Indra.

35 Hearing the screams
of the nurse,
king Sṛñjaya,
filled with anxiety,
rushed to the spot
where his son lay.

36 The tiger had lapped up
all the blood,
and the wan corpse
of his son
lay like a pale moon
fallen from the sky.

37 Cradling in his lap
the blood-drenched body
of his son,
king Sṛñjaya
began lamenting
in inconsolable despair.

38 Equally afflicted,
the mothers of the boy
also rushed
to the spot
where Sṛñjaya
was lamenting.

39 Despite his confusion,
Sṛñjaya concentrated
his mind on me.
Intuiting his grief,
I granted him
my darshan.

40 O lord of the earth!
I then narrated
to the disconsolate rājā
all the stories
recited to you
by the Yādava hero Krishna.

41 Then, with Indra's permission,
I brought the boy
back to life.
What is fated,
will happen.
It cannot happen.

42 And so the mahā-illustrious
prince Suvarṇaṣṭhīvī,
restored to life,
became once again
the darling delight
of his father and mother.

43 And, O king Yudhiṣṭhira,
after his father
went to heaven,
he ascended the throne,
and ruled the kingdom
for eleven hundred years.

44 That mahā-radiant ruler
performed
countless mahā-yajñas
with lavish *dakṣiṇās*,
propitiating the gods
and pitṛs.

45 Many sons were born to him,
and they had sons,
and the dynasty prospered;
and then, O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
Kāla-dharma took him away,
as Kāla-dharma always does

46 O Indra-among-rājās!
Be like him.
Discard your grief.
Listen to Keśava-Krishna
and Vyāsa
of mahā-tapasyā.

47 Take charge
of the kingdom
of your fathers
and grandfathers,
and discharge
your responsibilities.
Perform
the merit-producing mahā-yajñas,
and obtain the realms
of your heart's desire.

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SECTION THIRTY-TWO

1 Vaiśampāyana said: To rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
still plunged in despair, and silent,
rich-in-tapasyā Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,
wise in the truths of dharma, said:

2 "Lotus-eyed Yudhiṣṭhira!
It is the dharma of rājās to protect their subjects.
Those who follow dharma know that dharma
sustains those who follow dharma.

3 Therefore, O rājā, follow the example
of your ancestors
and rule the kingdom.
Practising tapasyā
is a Brahmin's dharma.
So the Vedas say.

4 O bull-brave Bharata!
Tapasyā has been
eternally recommended for Brahmins.
The dharma of a Kṣatriya
is the protection
of everyone.

5 Any self-seeking individual
who violates law and order
is a threat
to society
and deserves
to be severely punished.

6 Any such obsessed transgressor
who busily undermines
the basis of social confidence
and stability –
be a servant, or son, or man of tapasyā,
whatever –

7 Is a criminal who deserves
to be punished,
and even eliminated.
A rājā
who fails to do this
becomes himself guilty

8 If he fails to protect dharma
against assault,
he becomes a dharma-killer himself.
You have destroyed those
who had become destroyers
of dharma.

9 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Why are you grieving?
You have been true to your sva-dharma.
Killing the guilty, giving to the needy,
and protecting his people
are a rājā's dharma."

10 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"All-dharma-knowing, tapasyā-rich ṛṣi!
I have not the least doubt
your words are true.
Your insight into dharma
is unrivalled.

11 But I must confess, Brahmin,
that I suffer,
as if roasted and cooked in a slow fire,
because, for the sake of a kingdom,
I killed those
who did not deserve to be killed."

12 "O descendant of Bharata!"
replied Vyasa.
"Who is the doer –
Īśvara-God or Puruṣa-Man?
What is it – inevitable fate
or the fruits of karma?

13 If, O Bharata descendant,
Īśvara-God is behind
whatever good or bad man does,
then surely the fruits
of good or bad karma
should go to Īśvara-God.

14 Take a man who with an axe
cuts down a tree.
Surely the crime of tree-cutting
in his;
you cannot go about saying
the axe is guilty.

15 If you argue that the axe
is only a tool,
and the fruits of karma
attach only to humans,
then the maker of the axe
is the guilty party.

16 But surely it cannot be right,
O Kaunteya Yudhiṣṭhira,
to shift the blame from axe-wielder
to axe-maker;
so ultimately it is Īśvara-God
who is responsible.

17 If you say man makes his karma,
good or bad,
and leave Īśvara out of it,
then why worry –
there is no after-life,
and no consequences either.

18 There is no running away from fate,
O rājā.
Fate wields the weapon.
Fate punishes.
Don't blame the human
for the deeds of fate.

19

And if, O rājā, you say that,
if two warriors fight,
one has to die anyway,
it's all accidental,
then why worry? –
accidents will happen, now and later.

20

The safest way to know
what is vice and virtue
in this world
is to look at the sacred texts –
and they declare that a rājā
must judge and punish.

21

O descendant of Bharata!
The fact is,
karma is what makes the world go round.
There is no escape
from the fruits
of good and bad karma.

22

So it goes without saying,
O tiger-among-men,
that one should give up any karma
that produces
bitter fruit.
Give up your useless grief!

23

O rājā of the Bharata dynasty!
Even if faulty,
you should abide by sva-dharma.
This emaciation
of yourself
is completely unbecoming of you.

24

O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Do penance.
Expiate for your karma.
Only the fit and alive
expiate,
not the frail and dead.

25 O Bharata rājā!
Live –
and do penance.
For if your die
without doing penance,
fierce indeed
will be your suffering
in the next world.

SECTION THIRTY-THREE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"All dead – sons, grandsons,
brothers, fathers,
fathers-in-law,
gurus, maternal uncles,
and grandfathers,

2 Mahātmā Kṣatriyas,
and close friends,
and other relatives,
and nephews,
so many,
O Pitāmaha-Vyāsa,

3 So many Indra-like men
from so many lands, killed,
singly, by me, O Pitāmaha,
because I lusted for a kingdom.

4 O rich-in-tapasyā ṛṣi!
What have I gained
by slaughtering
these steady-in-dharma
soma-drinking
stalwart lords of the earth?

5 Again and again
I brood on what I did,
and the pain – it burns me!
This earth
denuded of so many glorious
lion-brave rulers –

6 I see myself slaughtering
hundreds of relatives,
and crores of others,
all mercilessly killed –
and I agonise, I agonise,
O Pitāmaha-Vyāsa.

7 And what will happen
to the illustrious ladies
who have been forever deprived
of their sons,
their husbands,
and their brothers?

8 They will brand us Pāṇḍavas
and Vṛṣṇis
as loathsome murderers.
Bereaved, helpless,
they will fall on the ground
and moan their plight.

9 Without sons, brothers, and fathers,
what else
can these sorrowing young girls do
except give up
their life-breath,
and go to the abode of Yama?

10 O finest of the twice-born!
I know, I know
their love will make them do this.
Very subtle is dharma –
the guilt of killing women
will fall on us.

11

No amount of expiation
will cleanse the guilt
of murdering friends and relatives.
I know, I know
we will be flung into hell,
hanging head downwards.

12

O Pitāmaha Vyāsa!
Finest of men!
I will waste myself away
in tapasyā.
What āśrama should I follow?
What is best for me?"

13

These were the feelings of Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
to which island-born Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa
gave very deep thought;
then the ṛṣi said
to Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira:

14

O bull-brave Kṣatriya rājā!
Do not confuse yourself.
Remember Kṣatriya-dharma.
Remember
all these Kṣatriyas perished
practising their sva-dharma.

15

They were seeking
this world's glory and grandeur
and mahā-fame.
They brought death upon themselves,
they became victims
of Cosmic Time Kāla.

16

Not you, not Bhīma, not Arjuna
killed them.
Their *prāṇa*-life-breath
was taken away
by the dharma
of Cosmic Time Kāla.

17 Kāla has no father,
    Kāla has no mother.
Kāla merely witnesses
    the way the world goes.
Kāla is the cause
    of this great killing.

18 O bull-brave Bharata!
    Kāla used this war
as an excuse
    to make creatures kill creatures.
Call this the glory of Kāla,
    if you like.

19 Keep in mind this:
    Kāla is only a witness
of good and bad karma.
    Kāla brings you
joy or sorrow,
    the fruits of karma.

20 O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
    Try if you can
to think of what karma
    the Kauravas did
that propelled them
    into the clutches of Kāla

21 Think also of your own karma.
    What was the karma
that made you,
    so strict-vowed and straight,
become the instrument
    leading to so much killing?

22 Like a tool fashioned
    by blacksmith or carpenter,
manipulated by its manipulator,
    karma, manipulated by Kāla,
manipulates
    the universe.

23 Who knows what makes fate
make and unmake
the lives of creatures?
This should make you realise
that grieving and rejoicing
are utterly useless.

24 What is this delusion
that possesses you
that you have killed them all?
Very well, O rājā,
if that is what you think,
do penance then.

25 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
I have heard
that in the distant past
a battle was fought
between the antigods
and their younger brothers, the gods.

26 What a mahā-war
that turned out to be!
For the sake
of glory and power,
the gods and antigods battled
for thirtytwo thousand years.

27 The gods transformed this earth
into a gory ocean of blood,
and succeeded
in the end
in slaughtering the Daityas
and gaining heaven.

28 They conquered the earth as well.
And then,
the learned-in-Veda
but pride-obsessed Brahmins,
who supported the Dānava antigods,
the Brahmins known

29 As the Śālavṛkas,
eightysix thousand of them,
famed the world over –
all these Brahmins,
O Bharata descendant,
were massacred by the gods.

30 Like the gods exterminating
the Daitya antigods,
any ill-ātmaned desecrators
of dharma
and champions of adharma
deserve to be exterminated.

31 It is not unjustified to kill
an individual
in order to save a family,
or kill a family
in order to save
a kingdom.

32 O ruler of men!
Times are when dharma
starts looking like adharma,
and adharma like dharma.
The wise know
what is what.

33 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Calm yourself.
You know the *śruti* sacred texts.
O Bharata descendant!
You have always followed
the path of the gods.

34 O bull-brave Pāṇḍava!
People like you
do not go to hell.
O foe-exterminator!
Comfort your brothers
and your friends.

35 Anyone who deliberately indulges
in wicked deeds,
and continues doing them
without feeling
any regret
or any shame whatsoever,

36 Must be regarded
as a perpetrator
of unpardonable wicked karma.
No expiation for him.
Even if he expiates,
he is not cleansed.

37 You were born noble.
You got involved in this
because of the misdeeds
of others.
Even so, you are prepared
to expiate.

38 The Aśvamedha mahā-yajña
is advised
as the finest expiation possible.
Perform it, mahārāja! –
and be free
of all misdeeds.

39 Pākaśāsana Pāka-slaying Indra
with the assistance of the Maruts
performed one by one
a hundred sacrifices
after killing his foes –
he is Śatakrata the Hundred-Sacrificer.

40 Completely cleansed, obtaining heaven,
and other blissful worlds,
surrounded by hosts of Maruts,
Śakra-Indra reigns
in radiant glory
in all the directions.

41 And the ṛṣis and the gods
sing the praises
of the lord of heaven,
and the *apsarās*
adore the consort of Śacī,
Śaci-pati Indra.

42 O blameless Yudhiṣṭhira!
You also
have conquered the earth
by your valour,
and your valour has humbled
the rulers of the earth.

43 It is time now for you,
O rājā,
to go with your friends
to their kingdoms,
and enthrone their brothers,
sons and grandsons.

44 To their living descendants,
to their heirs still in wombs,
show compassion.
Rule this earth,
spreading everywhere kindness
and goodness.

45 Let the daughters
of rulers without sons
rule the kingdom.
With their desires fulfilled,
they will forget
their grief.

46 O descendant of Bharata!
In this way,
establishing order and peace
in your kingdom,
perform the Horse-Sacrifice
as Indra did.

47 O bull-brave Kṣatriya!
There is no point
mourning the mahātmā Kṣatriyas
who have perished,
because, doomed to die,
they died doing their sva-karma.

48 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Descendant of Bharata!
Your Kṣatriya-dharma has won you
this thorn-free kingdom.
Abide by this dharma
and enjoy the bliss of the after-life.

SECTION THIRTY-FOUR

1 "O Pitāmaha Vyāsa!"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"What is the karma
for which expiation is needed?
And what kind of expiation
leads to absolution?"

2 If a man does deeds
that are forbidden
(replied Vyāsa),
and does not do what is recommended,
his misbehaviour requires him
to do expiation.

3 Any brahmacārī who wakes after sunrise
and sleeps before sunset,
who has dirty nails and black teeth,
is required to do expiation.

4 One whose younger brother marries first,
one who marries ahead of his elder brother,
a Brahmin-killer, a slanderer,
one who marries a younger sister
ahead of her elder sister, who marries
an elder sister after the younger has married,

5 One who breaks a vow,
who is guilty of the murder of a twice-born,
who does not teach the Vedas
to one who deserves to be taught the Vedas,
one who teaches the Vedas to a Brahmin
who does not deserve to be taught,

6 One who plunders a village,
one who sells meat,
one who commercialises the Vedas,
one, O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,
who is an arsonist,
one who trades in ideals,

7 One who kills a woman or a Śūdra –
those listed first
are worse offenders than the later –
one who tortures animals,
one who sets on fire
the houses of others,

8 One who resorts to lies
in order to feed himself,
one who insults a guru,
one who always mocks tradition –
all these are guilty,
and they are required to expiate.

9 Let me add to these
the acts that are forbidden
by the world
and the Vedas.
Listen to my words
with undivided attention.

10 To abandon one's sva-dharma
and follow the dharma of another,
to have a yajña
performed by one
not worthy of performing a yajña,
to eat forbidden food,

11 To refuse an asylum-seeker,
to neglect the welfare
of servants and attendants,
to make money
by selling drugs,
to kill birds and beasts,

12 And, śakti notwithstanding,
to refrain from sex,
and also, O Bharata descendant,
to refrain from giving to a cow
a portion
of one's daily cooked food,

13 To refuse to give *dakṣiṇā*
to a Brahmin,
to humiliate a Brahmin –
the wise in dharma
have declared such deeds
should never be done.

14 Guilty of adharma is the son
who quarrels with his father,
a disciple who sleeps
with his guru's wife,
a husband
who refuses to procreate.

15 O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
In brief and in detail
have I listed the deeds that,
some when done,
some when not done,
require to be expiated.

16 Let me now explain
how no blame attaches
even during the performance
of such deeds,
under circumstances
that are special.

17 It is perfectly permitted
to take up arms
and kill a Brahmin,
however Veda-learned he be,
if he takes up arms
in battle against you.

18 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The Vedas
even have a mantra about this.
The dharma I am expounding
has the sanction
of the Vedas.

19 The crime of Brahmin-killing
does not attach to a man
who kills a Brahmin
out to kill him.
A simple case this –
of anger clashing with anger.

20 The *saṁskāras* can re-sanctify
a dharma-cherishing man who,
unknowingly,
or in grave crisis,
comes under the influence
of intoxicating drinks.

21 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
This applies also
in the case of eating
forbidden food.
These misdeeds can be cleansed
by expiation.

22 If a guru expressly orders it,
no blame attaches
to a person who sleeps
with the guru's wife.
Uddālaka's son Śvetaketu
was begotten by a disciple.

23 Stealing for a guru
in dire need
incurs no blame,
only, of course,
if the one who steals
is not helpng himself,

24 And if he is stealing
only from one
other than a Brahmin,
and if he does not
in any way
himself profit from it.

25 A lie is permitted
to save one's own life
or that of another,
for the sake of one's guru,
to win over a woman,
or to arrange a marriage.

26 Ejaculation in a wet dream
does not break
a vow of brahmacarya.
Libations of ghee
poured in the sacred fire
will expiate for this.

27 If an elder brother cannot,
or becomes an ascetic,
the younger brother, without blame,
can marry.
Intercourse with a woman who requests it,
is not against dharma.

28 No animal should be killed,
or got killed.
But animals that are killed
for sacrificial rituals
have been graciously chosen so
by Providence.

29 No blame attaches if charity
is given
to an undeserving Brahmin,
no blame
if not given either
to a deserving Brahmin.

30 No blame attaches if a husband
casts off
a loose-charactered wife.
Such casting off of pus purifies her,
and does not stain
the husband.

31 A person who knows
the truth about soma-juice
and sells soma nonetheless,
does not incur blame.
No blame attaches
if one dismisses
an incompetent employee.
No blame attaches
if, to save cows,
a forest is set ablaze.

32 So much for karma,
the performance of which
brings no blame.
I will now explain
in detail
what expiation is all about.

SECTION THIRTY-FIVE

1 O Bharata descendant (continued Vyāsa),
by tapasyā, sacrificial ritual, and charity
a man can cleanse himself of ill-deeds,
provided he does not repeat his wickedness.

2 Subsisting on one meal daily,
himself doing all chores, begging his food
with skull-bowl and skull-topped staff in hand,
assiduous in his practice of *brahmacarya*,

3 Never finding fault with anyone,
sleeping on the bare ground,
publicly confessing his guilt –
if he does all this for twelve years,
he is absolved
of Brahmin-killing.

4 Making himself a target of attack
by wielders of weapons,
voluntarily or on the advice of learned men;
entering a blazing fire;
or with bowed head
three times

5 Walking a hundred *yojanas*
while *japa*-chanting a Veda,
or turning over
everything he possesses
to a Brahmin
well-versed in the Vedas,

6 Or giving him enough wealth
to make him feel secure,
or donating a house to him –
thus serving cows and Brahmins
will absolve him
of Brahmin-killing.

7 So will the *kṛccha*-vow
(three days morning meal, next three evening,
next three only begged food, next three total fast)
practised for six years.
Practised still more strictly,
the vow will absolve him in three years.

8 Subsisting on one meal a month
will absolve him in one year.
And if,
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
he fasts totally,
he will be cleansed in no time at all.

9 It goes without saying, of course,
that an Aśvamedha yajña
absolves a person
of killing a Brahmin
if he takes the *avabhṛta* bath
at the completion of the yajña.

10 Indeed, the *śruti* sacred texts
declare that he gets absolved
of all ill-deeds.
Absolved of Brahmin-killing is anyone
who lays down his life
for a Brahmin in battle.

11 Brahmin-killer notwithstanding,
if he gives
to deserving Brahmins
one hundred thousand cows,
he is absolved
of all his ill-deeds.

12 Absolved of all ill-deeds
is the man
who gives away
twentyfive thousand
kapila cows
that have calved.

13 Absolved of all ill-deeds
is the man who,
about to die,
gives to the poor and deserving
a thousand milch cows
with their calves.

14 O protector of the earth!
Freed of ill-deeds
is the man
who gives a hundred
Kāmbuja horses
to disciplined Brahmins.

15 O descendant of Bharata!
Freed of ill-deed also is he
who gratifies
even one person
but does not announce it
to anyone.

16 Purified in this world
and in the next
is the man who,
addicted to wine,
in expiation gulps down
burning-hot liquor.

17 Absolved of all ill-deeds
is he who jumps
from a mound in a desert,
or decides to renounce the world
by going
on a *mahā-prasthāna* pilgrimage.

18 According to the *śrutis*,
even a Brahmin addicted to liquor
is absolved
and attains the realm of Brahmā
if he performs
the Bṛhaspati-sava yajña.

19 If, O rājā, a person
addicted to liquor
gives up hate and malice,
and donates land,
and forever renounces liquor,
he is purified.

20 A person who sleeps
with his guru's wife
should lie on a red-hot iron sheet,
cut off his penis,
and walk,
always looking upwards.

21 He will be freed
of all his ill-deeds
after he leaves his body.
Women are absolved
if they lead a life of moderation
for one year.

22 Absolved of ill karma
is the person whose mahā-vow
is not to drink water for a year,
or who gives away all he has,
or lays down his life in battle
in order to save his guru.

23 A professional liar
and an insulter of his guru
are absolved of their guilt
if they perform acts
that are pleasing
to the guru.

24 Who breaks a brahmacarya vow
can be absolved
if he performs all the penances
for Brahmin-killing
and wears cowskin dress
for six months.

25 Severe vows practised
for a period of one year
absolve the man
who commits adultery
or who steals the wealth
of another.

26 Absolution is possible
only if the thief,
assiduously and methodically,
returns to the owner
the exact value
of whatever he has stolen.

27 Younger brother marrying
before elder brother does,
elder brother marrying
after younger has married –
are absolved by dedicatedly observing
the *kṛccha*-vow for twelve nights.

28 However, the younger brother,
to redeem his *pitṛs,*
should go through a second wedding ceremony
after his elder brother marries;
this purifies his wife,
and it purifies him.

29 Those who are well-versed
in dharma
say that women are absolved
if they observe
the four-month *caturmāsya* vow
of strictly regulated died.

30 A man should refrain from intercourse
with his wife
if he suspects her of misbehaviour;
but after her period
she becomes pure and shining,
like an ash-cleaned utensil.

31 A brass vessel defiled by a Śūdra,
or smelt by a cow,
or dirtied by the gargled spit of a Brahmin,
is cleansed by any of the ten purifiers:
cow's milk, curd, ghee, urine or dung,
dust, water, ashes, fire, anything acidic.

32 It is recommended that a Brahmin
should practise dharma in full.
A Kṣatriya rājā
should practise dharma
in three-fourths
instead of full.

33 A Vaiśya should practise it
by a fourth less
than a Kṣatriya,
a Śūdra another fourth less.
This decides the severity or lenience
of expiation

34 A person who wantonly kills
birds and beasts
and cuts down trees
expiates by proclaiming
his ill-deed
and fasting for three days and rights.

35 Having sex with a woman, O rājā,
with whom
one should not have sex,
is expiated by wearing wet robes
for six months
and sleeping on heaps of ash.

36 These are the rules laid down
by the sacred texts
for the expiation
of all deeds
that tradition declares
should not be done.

37 Freed from the stains
of all ill-deeds
is he who eats frugally,
discards malice, cherishes ahiṁsā,
and in a pure secluded spot chants
the Sāvitrī-Gāyatrī mantra.

38 Let him stand in the open in the day,
and sleep in the open at night.
Let him, fully dressed,
dip in the waters
thrice in the daytime
and thrice at night.

39 Let him be strict-vowed,
and refrain from speaking
with women, Śūdras, and degenerates.
This expiation
will free a twice-born from ill-deeds
done unknowingly.

40 The five elements are eternal witnesses
of all good or bad deeds
whose fruits come after one dies.
In this world, fruits of deeds
come in exact proportion
to the deeds.

41 One should try through charity and tapasyā
to increase the fruits of good, and decrease, ill-deeds.

42 May good deeds increase from more to more!
May ill-deeds continue to decrease!
May one expiate by liberally donating wealth!

43 I have explained how ill-deeds can be expiated.
But there is no expiation for mahā-heinous ill-deeds.

44 Ill-deeds relating to clean food, defiled food, O rājā,
done knowingly or unknowingly, can be expiated.

45 Deliberate ill-deed is far worse than indeliberate,
and expiation also is correspondingly heavy or light.

46 The *vidhi* sacred texts declare expiation is possible,
but only for men of *śraddhā* and believers in divinity.

47 But for the proud and malicious disbelievers
who have no *śraddhā*, expiation is not possible.

48 O finest of dharma-followers! O tiger-among-men!
Seekers of good now or later should emulate
noble conduct.

49 You will be cleansed, O rājā; you have protected,
dutifully killed enemies, and won your inheritance.

50 If you feel so sorry for yourself, then expiate!
Don't destroy yourself by this un-āryan self pity.

51 Listening to these words of revered bhagavan Vyāsa,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira first kept silent.

SECTION THIRTY-SIX

1 Then Yudhiṣṭhira said: Pitāmaha! Clean, unclear;
good gift, bad gift; deserving, undeserving . . .
Please explain.

2 Vyāsa replied: An ancient example is given
about this, of a dialogue between Prajāpati Manu
and Siddhas.

3 Long ago, strict-vowed ṛṣis went to radiant
Prajāpati Manu to clarify matters of dharma.

4 "Prajapati!" they asked. "What is food? Tell us.
Who is deserving? What are charity, gifts, study?
What should, and what should not be done?"

5 Because they asked, Self-Born Bhagavān Manu said:
In brief and in detail, I will explain dharma.

6 For un-heinous ill-deeds, *japa*, *homa*, fasting,
ātman-knowledge, sacred rivers suffice for expiation.

7 Visiting holy places where purified people reside,
mountains, gold-touched water, gems, sacred baths,

8 Pilgrimage to *deva-sthana* temples,
partaking of ghee –
all these can certainly
speedily purify a person.

9 The wise are not proud.
Anyone desiring long life
should practise
the *kṛccha*-vow for three nights,
and drink hot milk, ghee
and water.

10 These are the signs of dharma:
not taking what is not given,
charity, study, tapasyā,
practice of ahiṁsā,
speaking the truth,
and performing yajñas.

11 Depending on time and place,
what is dharma
can become adharma.
In special cases,
even stealing, lying and killing
can be dharma.

12 Immortality is serene meditation's fruit,
mortality the fruit of activity;
but misguided meditation
brings bad fruit;
both meditation and activity
have good and bad fruits.

13 Learned people say that dharma
and adharma
depend on time and place.
Apravṛtti-meditation and *pravṛtti*-activity
can be this-worldly
or Veda-idea-guided.

14 Even bad acts, done keeping in view
the gods, sacred texts,
the value of life,
and the means of sustaining life,
are transformed into producers
of good fruits.

15 But expiation must be performed
for any act
motivated with intent to harm,
when its doer
is fully aware of the mischief
it will do.

16 Any action that is mind-pleasing
or mind-displeasing,
done from anger or delusion,
is expiated by mortifying one's body,
eating sanctified food,
and chanting mantras.

17 A ruler of men
who does not punish a criminal
must fast one entire day.
If his *purohita*
advises otherwise,
the *purohita* must fast for three nights.

18 A grief-afflicted person
who tries to commit suicide
with a weapon, and fails,
must expiate
his condemnable deed
by fasting for three nights.

19 Those who abandon their community,
their social responsibility,
their country, their family-dharma,
those who abandon their dharma –
these people are utterly
bereft of dharma.

20 Should any problems arise
regarding dharma,
let them be resolved
by a committee of ten
learned in the Veda-śāstras,
or three dharma-expounders.

21 Brahmins are forbidden
to eat bull meat,
earth, tiny ants,
the glutinous fruit
of the *śleṣmātaka*-tree,
and poison.

22 Brahmins are forbidden
to eat fish that have no scales;
forbidden also are four-footed
water animals like frogs,
with the exception
of the tortoise.

23 *Bhāsa*-vultures, *haṁsa*-geese,
suparṇa-birds,
cakravāka-birds, ducks, cranes,
madgu-water-bird,
gṛdha-vultures,
hawks, owls,

24 All sharp-toothed,
four-footed flesh-eaters,
and birds,
and two-toothed creatures,
and four-jawed animals
are also forbidden.

25 A Brahmin is forbidden
to drink the milk of sheep,
the she-ass, the she-camel,
the milk of a ten-day calved cow,
of women,
and deer.

26 Nor should he eat food
cooked by a bereaving man,
or a woman
who has just given birth,
or any preparation of the milk
of a ten-day calved cow.

27 Rājā food diminishes energy;
Śūdra food diminishes brahmacarya;
food taken
from a goldsmith,
a husbandless or childless woman
diminishes the life-span.

28 A usurer's food is filth,
a prostitute's food is like semen.
Like semen also
the food
of an adultery-permitting husband
and a henpecked husband.

29 Forbidden is the food of a person
chosen for yajña initiation.
A miser, a yajña-peddler,
a carpenter,
a leather-dealer, an unchaste woman,
a washerman,

30 A physician, a watchman, –
food from them
is also forbidden.
All those who are censured
by an entire village,
those who live off dancing girls,

31 All those whose younger brothers
have married first,
professional bards, and gamblers, –
forbidden. Forbidden also
food left-hand-served,
food that is stale,

32 Food dipped in wine,
food that is touch-defiled,
food given before first serving others.
Wheat, sugarcane,
vegetable and milk preparations,
if over-fried;

33 Gram, roasted barley, if mixed with curd
and kept too long,
should not be eaten.
Rice-boiled-in-milk *pāyasa*,
kṛsara-khichri, meat,
and *pūpa*-cakes,

34 Unless consecrated to the gods,
should not be eaten
by Brahmin householders.
deva-ṛṣis, humans,
pitṛs
and all the household gods

35 Must first be pūjā-respected
by householders
before any food is partaken.
A householder
should be like a *bhikṣu*-mendicant
in his own home.

36 In this way should a householder
cherish dharma
with his wife dear to him.
Giving not for fame,
or out of fear,
or to any selfish supplicant,

37 Not giving to professional singers,
dancers and clowns –
should guide the gift-giving
of a man of dharma.
The drunk, the irresponsible,
the thief, the gossip-monger,

38 The dumb, the uncharactered,
the physically impaired,
the dwarf, the wicked,
the one born in a criminal family,
the uncultured, the Veda-ignorant Brahmin
should not be given gifts.

39 What is not given gracefully and properly,
and not received
gracefully and properly
becomes worthless
for the one who gives
and the one who receives.

40 Like a man drowning who tries to swim
across an ocean
with a *catechu* wood plank or a stone,
both giver and taker
of an improper gift
are doomed.

41 Wet sticks cannot fuel a fire.
Similarly, a gift
is utterly wasted
on a receiver
who has neither tapasyā, learning,
nor character.

42 Water kept in a skull-bowl
or in a dogskin bag
soon starts stinking.
Similarly, the *śruti*-scriptures
stink in a person
who is character-less.

43 But it is good to be compassionate
and not deny charity
to a Brahmin who flouts vows,
and is ignorant
of mantras and śāstras,
provided he does not speak ill of anyone.

44 But dharma ordains
and plain reason dictates
that charity should never be given,
even out of compassion,
to any person who is always
finding fault with others.

45 There are no two thoughts about this.
Utterly worthless
is the gift given
to a Veda-ignorant Brahmin
because he is undeserving
of any charity.

46 An elephant made of wood,
and a deer made of leather –
is a Brahmin
who does not know the Vedas –
in name only,
nothing else.

47 As useless as a eunuch
to women,
as a cow to a cow,
as a wingless bird,
is a Brahmin
ignorant of mantras.

48 As useless as a village
without cornfields,
well without water,
libations poured on ashes,
is a gift given
to a foolish Brahmin.

49 A foolish Brahmin is the ruin
of ritual food
offered to gods and *pitṛs.*
He is a thief –
he cannot show agyone the way
to excellence.

50 O bull-brave Bharata!
In brief, Yudhiṣṭhira,
have I explained
a mahā-important matter
which should be
everyone's concern.

SECTION THIRTY-SEVEN

1 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one! O mahā-muni!
O finest of the twice-born!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"I would like to know all about rāja-dharma,
and also all about the four castes.

2 O incomparable twice-born! What should one do
in times of calamity? What dharma
should one follow in order to conquer the world?

3 Your clarification
of what should be eaten, and what not,
and what is expiation,
has increased my curiosity,
and filled me with joy.
I wish to know more.

4 Practising dharma and ruling a kingdom
are often
at odds with each other.
Trying to reconcile
dharma and kingship
puzzles and confuses me."

5 Mahārāja Janamejaya (said Vaiśampāyana)
well-versed-in-the-Vedas Vyāsa
looked in the direction
of the ancient omniscient Nārada,
and said
to Yudhiṣṭhira:

6 "If it is your desire,
O mahā-muscled lord of men,
to know all about dharma,
then you should ask
the Kuru-pitāmaha elder,
grandsire Bhīṣma.

7 Bhāgīrathī-*putra*
Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma
knows all about all dharmas.
He will remove
all your confusion
about the mysteries of dharma.

8 He is the son of the celestial
three-world-flowing river
Devī Gaṅgā;
he has received
the darshan of Indra
and the gods;

9 He has served *prabhu*-lord Bṛhaspati
and the deva-ṛṣis,
and by serving them
he has gained insight
into the duties
of kingship.

10 Finest-of-Kauravas Bhīṣma
has obtained
full knowledge of the śāstras
which were known
by Śukra-Uśanas and Bṛhaspati
the guru of the gods.

11 With his practice of strict vows,
mahā-muscled Bhīṣma
gained knowledge of the Vedas
and Vedāṅgas
from Vāsiṣṭha,
and Cyavana of the Bhārgavas.

12 From splendidly refulgent Sanatkumāra,
the eldest mind-born son
of Prajāpati Brahmā,
he learnt all
about the nature of Adhyātmā,
the Ultimate Ātman.

13 From Mārkaṇḍeya
he learnt all about the dharma
of the world-renouncing *yatis*;
from Paraśurāma
and Śakra-Indra
he mastered all war-skills.

14 Born mortal, bull-brave Bhīṣma
has the power
to choose the time of his death.
He is childless,
yet one hears
that holy celestial realms are his.

15 To his sabhā flock Brahma-ṛṣis
of pious merit,
always at his service.
There is nothing
in jñāna-yajña selfless-knowledge
not known to him.

16 This knower-of-dharma who knows
the subtlest truths
of dharma-and-artha –
go to wise-in-dharma
Bhīṣma before he surrenders
his *prāṇa*-life-breath."

17 Mahā-minded, wise-in-foresight
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira
listened carefully,
and said
to finest-of-speakers
Satyavatī's son Vyāsa:

18 "I am guilty
of a mahā-hair-raising massacre
of my own people.
I have offended
the three worlds,
I have ruined the earth.

19 Bhīṣma fought clean,
yet I got him killed,
deceitfully.
How can I now
go to him
for advice?"

20 Mahā-minded, finest-of-the-Yādavas,
mahā-muscled Vāsudeva-Krishna,
who desired the welfare
of the four castes,
then said
to finest-of-kings Yudhiṣṭhira:

21 "O excellent king!
Give up
this stubborn slavery to grief!
Listen
to bhagavān Vyāsa,
and do what he says.

22 O mahā-muscled one!
All these Brahmins
and your mahā-radiant brothers
are looking up to you
like summer-oppressed sufferers
waiting for rain.

23 They are all here, mahārāja –
all the rājās
who survived the war,
all the members
of the four castes of the kingdom
of Kurujāṅgala.

24 To provide for the welfare of,
and to please,
these mahātmā Brahmins,
to abide by the advice
of your immeasurably radiant guru
Vyāsa,

25 To please us, who are your friends
and well-wishers –
and to please Draupadī too –
O scorcher of foes,
you must do what is good
for the whole world."

26 Lotus-petal-eyed rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
listened to the words of Krishna;
mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira,
seeking the welfare of the worlds,
rose to his feet.

27 O tiger-among-men Janamejaya!
Listening
to the advice of Krishna himself,
of island-born Dvaipāyana-Vyāsa,
Devasthāna,
Jiṣṇu-Arjuna,

28 And to the advice
of so many others,
mahā-illustrious Yudhiṣṭhira,
was persuaded
to shake off
his paralysing and painful depression.

29 Learned in the wisdom of *śruti*,
ready to listen
to what should be heard,
spoken by those worth listening to,
Pāṇḍu's son obtained
peace of mind.

30 Surrounded by them
like the moon surrounded by stars,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
placing at the head of all Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
decided to enter his city
Hastināpura.

31

Wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira,
    son of Kuntī,
before entering the capital,
    worshipped the gods
and honoured
    the thousands of Brahmins.

32

A glistening white chariot,
    decorated with blankets
and *ajina*-deerskins,
    and yoked to sixteen white bullocks
with auspicious marks,
    was brought before him,

33

Sanctified by the chanting of mantras.
    Eulogised and revered
by professional panegyrists,
    Yudhiṣṭhira climbed
into the chariot,
    like Soma in his ambrosial vehicle.

34

Kuntī's son,
    booming-brave Bhīma,
held the reins;
    Arjuna held
a pure-white umbrella
    over Yudhiṣṭhira's head.

35

That white umbrella
    held aloft the chariot
dazzled the eyes
    like a white cloud
in the sky
    spangled with stars.

36

Mādrī's valiant twin sons,
    Nakula and Sahadeva
waved two gem-encrusted
    yak-tail fans
that shone
    like rays of the moon.

37 The five brothers,
O rājā,
in that white chariot
looked
like the five elements
in the human body.

38 Riding a white chariot,
pulled by horses
as swift as the mind,
following Yudhiṣṭhira,
came Yuyutsu,
O rājā Janamejaya.

39 In his resplendent chariot
of gold,
pulled by Śaibya and Sugrīva,
came Krishna,
accompanied by Sātyaki,
following the Kauravas.

40 O descendant of Bharata!
Leading the son of Kuntī,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
in a palanquin, with Gāndhārī,
was Yudhiṣṭhira's uncle-pitā
Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

41 Under the protection of Vidura
came the Kaurava ladies,
as well as Kuntī
and Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī,
all of them seated
in splendid chariots.

42 And behind them came
a motley ornamented host
of elephants and horses
and chariot-heroes
and cavalry
and foot-soldiers.

43 In this way, to the accompaniment
of praises sweetly chanted
by *sūtas, vaitālikas*
and *māgadha* bards,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira entered
the Elephant City.

44 The ceremonial city entry
of Yudhiṣṭhira
the mahā-muscled monarch
was so splendid
that the likes of it
had never been seen before.

45 To celebrate the entry
of Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
teeming crowds
of healthy and happy citizens
shouted their welcome
in the busy roads.

46 White flower-garlands and flags
and festoons
adorned the main roads
of the procession,
and incense sticks
spread ubiquitous fragrance.

47 Unguents and perfumes
and flowers
of all kinds,
and garlands
graced all the mansions
around the palace.

48 At the city gates
were placed
bright new water-filled pots,
and everywhere
could be seen bunches
of white flowers.

49 Accompanied
by friends and well-wishers,
praised
by sweet-voiced bards,
Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
passed through
the decorated gates
of Hastināpura.

SECTION THIRTY-EIGHT

1 To welcome the sons of Pṛthā-Kuntī
into the capital
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
hundreds and thousands
of citizens thronged the roads
of the city.

2 What a spectacle it was,
O rājā –
all the main roads
swelling with people
like mahā-ocean waves
at the rising of the moon.

3 With ladies crowded in them,
O Bharata descendant,
the resplendently decorated mansions
seemed to bend and sway.

4 With soft, modulated voices,
the ladies sang
the praises of Yudhiṣṭhira,
Bhīma and Arjuna,
and the Pāṇḍava twins,
Mādrī's sons.

5 "Blessed Pāñcālī!
Fortunate Draupadī!
Serving graciously
Your husbands like Gautamī
Of the Gautama dynasty
Served mahā-ṛṣis

6 Faithfully, fruitfully,
Jaṭilā-Bhāvinī!"
These were the words, mahārāja,
with which
the ladies sang the praises
of Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī.

7 Such beautiful words,
O Bharata descendant,
such enchanting sentiments –
the residents of the capital
were overwhelmed
by the eulogy.

8 Making his way
through the cheering crowds
in the capital,
so vividly decorated,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
arrived at the palace.

9 And immediately he was surrounded
by the citizens
and by many
from the provinces,
who spoke these words
pleasing to his ears:

10 "O foe-exterminating
Indra-among-rājās!
How fortunate that you have won!
How fortunate that the strength
of your dharma has restored
your kingdom to you!

11 Be our rājā, mahārāja,
for a hundred years!
Rule your kingdom
with dharma,
like Indra
ruling heaven."

12 Pūjā-respected at the gates
of the palace
with this auspicious welcome,
and accepting
the blessings
of the twice-born,

13 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
alighted from his chariot
and entered the palace
which glowed
with the glory and victory
of Indra's own palace.

14 Stepping inside,
Śrīmān Yudhiṣṭhira
offered pūjā
to the household deities
with precious gems,
perfumes and garlands.

15 Stepping out, mahā-illustrious
Śrīmān Yudhiṣṭhira
saw many Brahmins
waiting for him
with auspicious articles
in their hands.

16 Surrounded by the Brahmins,
all eager to bless him,
he shone
like the lambent moon
surrounded
by twinkling stars.

17

Following behind guru Dhaumya
and his uncle-*pitā*
Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira
offered pūjā
to the twice-born.

18

O Indra-among-rājās!
He gratified them
with flowers, sweets, gems,
heaps of gold,
cows, robes,
and whatever else they desired.

19

O descendent of Bharata!
Ear-shoothing
and heart-pleasing shouts
of "Holy! Holy!"
rose to the sky,
delighting well-wishers.

20

O Bharata rājā!
Sweet and soft
as the call of *haṁsa*-swans
were the clear syllables
that came from the lips
of learned Brahmins.

21

And then, O king,
the boom of *dundubhi*-drums
and the victory-blare
of conches
spiralled their enchantment
through the city.

22

Suddenly there was silence.
A rākṣasa called Cārvāka,
disguised as a Brahmin,
stepped forward,
and wanted to say something
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

23 A loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend
of Duryodhana.
Dressed like a *bhikṣu*-mendicant.
Rosary in hand.
Tufted hair. Three-pronged staff.
Determined. Fearless.

24 O Indra-among-rājās!
He stood there
among those thousands
of tapasyā-and-vow-practising Brahmins
waiting
to bless Yudhiṣṭhira –

25 This wicked scoundrel, intending
to harm the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
without asking permission
from the Brahmins,
said
to the earth-lord Yudhiṣṭhira:

26 "These Brahmins want me
to be their spokesman.
They want me to say:
'You wicked king!
Murderer of kinsmen! *Dhik*!
Shame on you!

27 How has it profited you,
son of Kuntī,
to kill your kinsmen?
Gurus butchered, kinsmen killed –
and you alive?
Why don't you die?' "

28 Appalled by the words
of the wicked rākṣasa,
the Brahmins,
agitated and enraged,
began to cast blame
on Cārvāka.

29 O lord of the earth!
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira listened;
and the Brahmins,
depressed and ashamed,
then fell silent,
saying not a word.

30 "Be gentle with me,"
Yudhiṣṭhira said.
"I *praṇāma* you.
I am troubled,
deeply troubled.
Don't shame me."

31 O lord of the world! O rājā!
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
The Brahmins spoke up:
"It's not us, O earth-lord.
We came here
to bless you."

32 The tapasyā of the Veda-wise Brahmins
had purified them;
with eyes of wisdom
they saw through the disguise
of the speaker
in their midst.

33 "It's Cārvāka," the Brahmins said,
"the *sakhā*-friend of Duryodhana.
He's a rākṣasa.
He's here disguised as a mendicant
in order to help
his friend.

34 O dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira!
It's not us blaming you.
Do not fear.
We bless you –
may fortune be with you
and your brothers."

35 Blind with rage, the Brahmins
(contnued Vaiśampāyana)
intoned "Huṁ!"
With purified minds,
then and there they killed
the criminal rākṣasa.

36 Incinerated by the energy
of those speakers of Brahmā-truths,
the rākṣasa
became a heap of ashes,
like a young tree blasted
by Mahendra-Indra's thunderbolt.

37 Pūjā-respected, the Brahmins left,
copiously blessing
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.
And Pāṇḍu's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and his friends,
rejoiced.

SECTION THIRTY-NINE

1 Devakī's son Janārdana-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
the all-seeing one,
said to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and the Pāṇḍava brothers
who stood facing him:

2 "*Tāta*! Dear friend! In this world,
Brahmins are like worship-worthy gods.
Their words are like poison,
but they are easy to please.

3 O mahā-muscled rājā!
In the Kṛta-yuga
a rākṣasa named Cārvāka
performed severe tapasyā
for many years
in the ashram of Badari.

4 O descendant of Bharata!
When repeatedly asked by Brahmā
what boon he desired,
he replied
that he would like to be immune
from fear from human beings.

5 Lord-of-the-word Jagat-pati Brahmā
granted him immunity
from fear
on one condition –
that he took care
never to insult Brahmins.

6 Armed with that boon,
the mahā-powerful,
ill-ātmaned rākṣasa
of tremendous prowess
and fierce karma
began persecuting the gods.

7 Harassed by the prowess
of the rākṣasa,
the gods assembled
and approached Brahmā
with a request
that he be killed.

8 O descendant of Bharata!
Brahmā assured them,
saying, 'I have already
made arrangements
for the death
of this rākṣasa.

9 He will become
the loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend
of king Duryodhana,
and his love for Duryodhana
will make him
offend Brahmins.

10 Enraged by his insults,
the Brahmins,
whose strength is word-power,
will strike him down with words,
and reduce him
to ashes.'

11 O bull-brave Bharata!
O finest of kings!
Cast off your grief.
The rākṣasa is dead.
He has received
the punishment of Brahmā.

12 It is your Kṣatriya-dharma,
O earth-lord,
that has made you
kill your kinsmen.
Those bull-brave mahātmā Kṣatriyas
have attained heaven.

13 O never-failing Yudhiṣṭhira!
Do not give up.
Do what has to be done.
Kill your enemies,
protect your subjects,
and pūjā-respect the twice-born."

SECTION FORTY

1 Free of grief-fever and remorse
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Kunti's son rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
sat on a splendid
throne of gold,
facing the east.

2 On another resplendent seat,
also of gold,
facing him,
sat Vāsudeva-Krishna
and foe-exterminator
Yuyudhāna-Sātyaki.

3 Flanking rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
on gem-encrusted seats,
were the two mahātmās
Bhīma and Arjuna.

4 On a pure-white throne
of ivory,
filigreed with *jambu*-gold
sat Pṛthā-Kuntī,
with Sahadeva
and Nakula.

5 Sudharman, Vidura, Dhaumya
and Kaurava Dhṛtarāṣṭra –
each of them sat
on a separate seat
that dazzled
with glorious incandescence.

6 And sitting next
to rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
were Yuyutsu,
Sañjaya,
and illustrious
Gāndhārī.

7 Sitting on his throne,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
touched white flowers,
unhusked ice,
svastika, earth, gold, silver
and precious gems.

8 One by one, led by the purohita,
the subjects
approached
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
with a variety of offerings
of auspicious gifts.

9 Then were brought
earth and gold
and precious gems,
coronation vessels,
and other
miscellaneous essentials:

10 Gold, silver, brass,
carved wooden images,
water-filled pots,
flowers, garlands,
fried paddy, kuśa-grass,
milk, curd;

11 *Śami* and *pippala* twigs,
palāśa-flowers,
honey and ghee,
udumbara-wood ladles,
and conches
with gold filigree.

12 The purohita Dhaumya,
with the permission
of Dāśārha-Krishna,
constructed the auspicious *vedī*-altar
inclining
to the north and east.

13 Next to it,
on a resplendent seat
blazing like white fire,
the *sarvatobhadra* seat
which was covered
with tiger-skin,

14 Wise Dhaumya requested
mahātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
and Drupada's daughter Kṛṣṇā-Draupadī
to sit,
as he chanted mantras and poured libations
in the sacred fire.

15 From the pūjā-sanctified
Pāñcajanya conch,
Dāśārha-Krishna poured water
on the head
on the lord of the earth,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira.

16 The rāja-ṛṣi Dhṛtarāṣṭra
and others
performed the same ritual.
The Pāṇḍava brothers,
who, after the permission
given by Krishna

17 To perform the Pāñcajanya
lustral coronation,
sat around Yudhiṣṭhira,
made him look celestial.
Paṇava, anaka and *dundubhi* drums
sounded.

18 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
accepted the honour
as recommended by dharma.
Distributing
lavish gifts of *dakṣiṇā*,
and pūjā-respecting

19 The Brahmins who welcomed
his coronation
with *svasti*-benedictions,
Yudhiṣṭhira rewarded their Veda-learning,
patience and goodness
with a thousand gold coins.

20 The gratified Brahmins, O rājā,
blessed him
and wished him victory.
With melodious *haṁsa*-voices
they sang
his praises:

21 "How wonderful your victory,
O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
O mahā-muscled one!
O mahā-radiant monarch!
How fortunate your sva-dharma
has won you your kingdom!

22 How fortunate that Pāṇḍava Bhima,
O rājā,
and the bow-wielder Arjuna,
and the twin sons
of Mādrī and Pāṇḍu
are well

23 And have survived the war
that wiped out countless heroes –
how wonderful!
O Bharata descendant!
All that remains to be done –
do it quickly now!"

24 O Bharata descendant Janamejaya!
Thus exalted,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
determined,
with his well-wishers,
to accept royal responsibility.

SECTION FORTY-ONE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira heard all that was spoken
appropriate to the time and place
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and the rājā replied to the assembled people:

2 “Fortunate indeed are the Pāṇḍavas
whose virtues, real or imagined,
are such that they receive such fulsome praise
from bull-brave Brahmins.

3 It is really your goodness,
totally free
from envy or dislike of any kind,
that discovers
such virtues in us,
and praises them so liberally.

4 The fact is: mahārāja Dhṛtarāṣṭra
is our uncle-*pitā*.
If you wish to please us,
abide by what he says,
and do your best
to please him.

5 I have killed my kinsmen.
Now I live
only to serve him,
in even the littlest things
to be always
attending on him.

6 If my well-wishers really want
to wish me well,
then all I ask is:
keep serving
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira as you did
in the past.

7 For he is the lord of the world,
your lord, and my lord.
The whole world
belongs to him,
all the Pāṇḍavas
belong to him.

8 Cherish these words of mine
 in the deepest core
of your heart."
 Saying this,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira gave them
 leave to go.

9 Dismissing the citizens
 and all who had come
from the provinces,
 delighter-of-the-Kauravas Yudhiṣṭhira
installed Pāṇḍava Bhīma
 as Yuvarāja.

10 Affectionately he appointed wise Vidura
 minister in charge
of the six-fold state policy
 of peace, war, transport,
planned retreat, diplomatic relations,
 and defence preparations.

11 And accomplished-in-all-guṇas
 mature in years Sañjaya
was placed
 in charge of finance,
and supervisor of essential
 and inessential development.

12 Nakula was placed in charge
 of the armed forces –
their size, their pay,
 and everything else
conducive to the health
 of the military.

13 As for Phālguna-Arjuna, maharāja,
 Yudhiṣṭhira made him responsible
for suppressing
 the kingdom's foreign foes,
and wiping out
 internal criminal elements.

14 Finest-of-purohitas Dhaumya
was given charge
of attending
to the needs of Brahmins,
and facilitating rituals to the gods,
and other sacred matters.

15 O lord of the world!
Sahadeva he wanted
always to be at his side,
and so he entrusted him
with the security and protection
of the king.

16 Whoever he considered competent
and responsible
for discharge of royal duties –
lord-of-the-earth Yudhiṣṭhira
cheerfully apointed him
to that post.

17 Exterminator-of-hostile-heroes
dharma-cherishing
dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira
then said
to Vidura, Sañjaya
and mahā-minded Yuyutsu:

18 "Every day you must carefully
and faithfully
attend to every need
of my uncle-*pitā*
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra –
without fail.

19 And with the permission
of rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
you should also attend
to the needs
of the citizens
and of all who live
in the provinces,
on the basis
of the authority
of the department
of which
you are in charge."

SECTION FORTY-TWO

1 Noble-minded rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
then performed the *śrāddha*-obsequies
of all his kinsmen
who had perished
on the battlefield.

2 For the solace of his dead sons,
rājā Dhṛtarāṣṭra
distributed at the ceremony
immense wealth –
wealth that could satisfy
every possible desire –

3 And glittering mahā-precious gems also
were gifted by the mahā-illustrious king.
As for Droṇa,
mahā-ātmaned Karṇa,

4 Dhṛṣṭadyumna, Abhimanyu,
the rākṣasa Hiḍimba's
son Ghaṭotkaca,
Virāṭa,
and so many of his well-wishers
who served him loyally,

5 Drupada, and Draupadī's sons –
Yudhiṣṭhira, assisted by Draupadī,
performed their funeral rites.
To solace the dead,
to thousands of Brahmins,
one by one,

6 He distributed wealth,
gems, cows,
and robes lavishly.
For the earth-lords
who had perished
without kith and kin,

7 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira arranged
funeral rites also,
for their peace and solace.
He ordered sabhās,
food-and-water-distribution centres
constructed –

8 And in this way Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira
honoured the memories
of well-wishers.
Freed in this way
of his debt to them,
and the world's censure,

9 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira discharged his duties,
and ruled his subjects
with dharma.
As in the past,
towards Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Gāndhārī and Vidura

10 He showed pūjā-respect,
appropriately honouring
all the Kauravas and court officials.
And the ladies,
who had lost their brave husbands
and sons –

11 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira pūjā-respected
    and protected the Kaurava ladies
with deep compassion.
    Feeding, clothing and sheltering
the destitute,
    the distressed and sightless,

12 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira treated them
    with lovingkindness.
Freed of his debts,
    foe-crushing conqueror-of-the-world
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
    passed his days in perfect happiness.

SECTION FORTY-THREE

1 After his *abhiṣeka*-coronation
    (continued Vaiśampāyana),
mahā-wise rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
    palms joined in *añjali*,
with a pure mind
    said to lotus-eyed Dāśārha-Krishna:

2 " 'It is through your grace,
    O Krishna,
O tiger-brave Yādava,
    your guidance,
your strength,
    wisdom and valour

3 That I have recovered the kingdom
    of my fathers and grandfathers.
O lotus-eyed destroyer of foes, *namaste*!
    Once again, I revere you.

4 You are the One and Only!
You are Puruṣa the Supreme Spirit!
You are the Lord of the Sātvatas!
Variously have the twice-born
Sung the glory
Of your various names!

5 O World-Artificer Viśvakarman!
Namaste! O Ātman-of-the-universe!
Viśvātman! O Creator-of-the-universe!
Viśva-sambhava! O World-Pervader Viṣṇu!
O Victorious One Jiṣṇu! Hare Krishna!
O Vaikuṇṭha! O Finest-of-men Puruṣottama!

6 O Purāṇa! Ancient One!
Seven times born from the womb of Aditi!
O Pṛśni-garbha! O Pṛśni-born!
O celebrated Tri-yuga Deity
Of the Kṛta and Tretā
And Dvāpara!

7 Śuci-śravā! O Immaculate One!
Yajña-worshipped Ghṛtāci!
O Lord-of-the senses Hṛṣīkeśa!
O Haṁsa! O three-eyed Śambhu-Śiva!
O Sole Deity who are radiant Vibhu
And Dāmodara the Self-Restrained One!

8 Varāha the Boar! Agni Fire!
Vṛṣabha Bull-Energy!
Tārkṣya-Garuḍa-bannered!
Anīkasāha Repulser-of-foes!
O Puruṣa! Refulgent-rayed Śipiviṣṭa!
O wide-striding Urukrama-Viṣṇu!!

9 O finest of the finest!
Fierce army-commander! Truth personified!
Provider of food! Guha-Kārtikeya!
O undeteriorating destroyer of enemies!
O Saṁskṛta Perfect One!
Vikṛtir-vṛṣa Always-Evolving-Bull!

10 O Kṛṣṇa-dharma! Ādi the First.
O Wind divinity Marut Vṛṣākapi!
O Vṛṣa-darbha! O Sindhu-Ocean!
You are Vidharma, the Attribute-less One!
Tri-kukup the Three-Humped! Tri-dhāmā!
You who descend from heaven on earth!

11 O Samrāṭ, Virāṭa, Khirāt!
O Sura-rāja Rājā of the gods!
Bhavodbhava Creation's Creator!
Everywhere-pervading Krishna!
You are the fire
Called Kṛṣṇa-vartamā!

12 O Perfect Sacrificer Sviṣṭakṛt!
O Finest of Physicians!
You are Kapila and Vāmana!
You are Yajña!
You are Pataṅga-Garuḍa!
You are Yajñasena!

13 O Śikhaṇḍin Peacock-Feathered One!
You are Nahuṣa! You are Babhru!
O sky-enveloping constellation Punarvasu!
O deep-dark Subabhru! Rukma-yajña!
Magnificent-army-leader Suṣeṇa!
O everywhere-resounding *dundubhi*-drum!

14 O sharp-felly-chariot-wheeled Gabhastinemi!
Lotus of śrī-prosperity Śri-padma!
O Puṣkara! O flower-bearer Puspadharana!
You are the one celebrated
As the Supremely Subtle
And the Resplendently Radiant!

15 O Reservoir of all waters!
O Brahma! O Sacred Refuge!
O Dhāmavit Knower of Sacred Refuges!
O Hiraṇyagarbha Golden Womb of the Sun!
O Svadhā and Svāhā chants!
O Keśava-Krishna!

16 O Krishna! World-Creator
And World-Destroyer!
World-Yoni and World-Controller!
O World-Begetter and World-Lord!
Wielder of *śārṅga*-bow, cakra and sword!
Namo'astu te! I bow to you."

17 Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira glorified Krishna
in the sabhā,
and lotus-eyed Krishna was pleased;
the tiger-brave Yādava
pleased the eldest Pāṇḍava brother
with charming words.

18 Anyone who repeats the hundred names
of Viṣṇu-Kṛṣṇa
as eulogised by Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
or
hears them chanted,
is freed of all ill-deeds.

SECTION FORTY-FOUR

1 Then king Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
dismissed the people
in the royal sabhā,
and they returned
to their respective homes.

2 Śrīmān rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
consoling brilliantly brave
Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the twins
Nakula and Sahadeva,
said to them:

3 "The weapons of your enemies in the mahā-battle
have wounded you.
Grief and anger agitate you.
You are distracted, and exhausted.

4 O bull-brave Bharatas!
Because of me,
you were helplessly driven
into forest-exile,
where you had to suffer
hardship and torment.

5 It is time now for you
to relish
the fruits of victory.
Rest yourselves,
refresh yourselves.
We will meet in the morning."

6 The magnificent palace
of Duryodhana,
lavished with many rooms,
glittering with precious stones,
with any number
of servants and maids,

7 With Dhṛtarāṣṭra's permission,
was given
by Duryodhana's cousin-brother Yudhiṣṭhira
to wolf-waisted mahā-muscled
Vṛkodara-Bhīma, who strode into it
like Meghavat-Indra in his palace.

8 Duḥśāsana's palace,
a duplicate of Duryodhana's
decorated
with beautiful garlands,
and shining
golden gates,

9 With male and female slaves,
abounding in luxury,
by command
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
was given
to mahā-muscled Arjuna.

10 Grander even than Duḥśāsana's
was the palace
of Durmarśana,
a gold-and-gem-encrusted edifice
that equalled in splendour
the mansion of Kubera.

11 Mahārāja! That wondrous palace
was lovingly given
by Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
who suffered such hardships
when exiled
in the mahā-forest.

12 Still grander was the gold-embellished
dazzling palace of Durmukha,
graced
with a galaxy
of lotus-petal-eyed girls,
and luxurious beds,

13 Which went to Sahadeva,
who always pleased Yudhiṣṭhira.
And Sahadeva
was as delighted with it,
as Dhananda-Kubera was
on obtaining Kailāsa.

14 O lord of the world!
Yuyutsu, Vidura,
Sañjaya, Sudharman
and Dhaumya
went to the residences
which they had already.

15 Like a tiger entering a mountain cave,
tiger-brave Śauri-Krishna,
accompanied
by Sātyaki,
entered the palace
of Arjuna.

16 Feasting on delicious food
and drinks,
they woke refreshed and happy
next morning,
and presented themselves
before rājā Yudhiṣṭhira.

SECTION FORTY-FIVE

1 "Tell me, O excellent Brahmin,"
said Janamejaya,
"what next did the mahā-muscled
son-of-Dharma Yudhiṣṭhira
do after regaining
his kingdom?

2 And, O ṛṣi, tell me in every detail
what Bhagavān Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna did –
the valiant hero,
the supreme guru of the three worlds?"

3 O Indra-among rājās!
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
O defectless monarch!
Listen to what the Pāṇḍavas did,
after honouring
Vāsudeva-Krishna.

4 First of all, mahārāja,
Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira,
after regaining his kingdom,
entrusted the four castes
to the proper performance
of their respective duties.

5 To each of a thousand *snātaka*
novitiate Brahmins,
Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira
gave as gift
a thousand *niṣka*
gold coins.

6 He met the needs of dependents,
servants, shelter-seekers and guests;
and he satisfied
the distressed and helpless,
and the *tarka*-thinkers who espoused
reason and logic.

7 To his purohita Dhaumya
he gifted
ten thousand cows,
much wealth
in gold and silver
and countless robes.

8 Mahārāja! He gave Kṛpa
the respect
due to a guru.
Strict-vowed rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
offered Vidura
his pūjā-respect.

9 Finest of charity-givers Yudhiṣṭhira
saw to it
that all shelter-seekers
received food
and drink, and clothes,
beds and seats.

10 O finest-of-rājās Janamejaya!
Restoring peace in his kingdom,
mahā-illustrious
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
offered pūjā-respect to Yuyutsu
and Dhṛtarāṣṭra.

11 Entrusting the kingdom
to Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Gāndhārī and Vidura,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
experienced
profound personal peace and happiness.

12 Gratifying all his subjects
in this way,
palms joined in *añjali*,
O bull-brave Bharata,
Yudhiṣṭhira went
to mahātmā Vāsudeva-Krishna.

13 He saw blue-cloud-complexioned Krishna
relaxing
on a magnificent seat
that was covered
with gold filigree
and studded with precious stones.

14 He was dressed
in a yellow silken robe,
he dazzled
with all his celestial ornaments;
indeed, he was himself
like a gold-set gem.

15 The Kaustubha gem
on his chest
glowed with the glory
of the sun at early dawn
drenching
the Udaya hill.

16 No simile in the three worlds
can describe
that wonderful vision.
Viṣṇu himself in person!
Approaching
mahātmā Krishna,

17 Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
smiling gently,
said sweetly:
"Did you sleep well
last night,
O finest of learned men?

18 O never-failing one!
Are you happy,
absolutely happy?
Is Buddhi-devi,
O most intelligent one,
happy with you?

19 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
By your grace
have we regained our kingdom
You are the refuge
and the glory
of the three worlds.

20 Your grace has given us
glorious victory,
and kept us stable in dharma."
Foe-crushing Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
received no reply.
Bhagavān Krishna was deep in *dhyāna*-meditation.

SECTION FORTY-SIX

1 "Wonderful! Incredibly wonderful!"
exclaimed Yudhiṣṭhira.
"You in such deep meditation,
O illimitably valiant one!
Is everything all right
in the three worlds?

2 O bull-brave hero! O divine one!
Transcending waking, dreaming,
and dreamless sleeping,
you are in the fourth state of meditation –
the perfect peace of silence: *turiya.*
I am wonderstruck.

3 Your five active life-breaths are at peace
in your physical body.
Peacefully stabilised in your mind
are all your senses.

4 O Govinda-Krishna!
Your speech and your *sattva*-essence
are at peace in your *buddhi*-intellect.
The gods presiding over your guṇas
are at peace with your ātman
Kṣetrajña the knower-of-the-guṇas.

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5 Your hairs stand on end.
Your mind and *buddhi*-intellect
are perfectly still,
as still, O Mādhava-Krishna,
as a block of wood,
or a door, or a stone.

6 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
O divine one!
Like the unflickering flame
of a lamp
in a windless spot are you,
like an unmoving rock.

7 If I am in any way worthy,
O divine one,
if you do not wish to keep it
secret,
then tell me the cause,
I beg of you.

8 O Puruṣottama! Finest of men!
You are the Maker and Breaker,
the Destroyable
and Undestroyable,
without beginning, without end,
the Primal Creator.

9 I touch your feet with my head
and *praṇāma* you.
I am your *bhakta*-devotee.
O finest-of-dharma-knowers!
Tell me the truth of the nature
of *dhyāna*-meditation."

10 Returning his mind, intellect and senses
to normal,
Vāsava-Indra's younger brother
Bhagavān Krishna
smiled
and said to Yudhiṣṭhira:

11 "Tiger-among-men Bhīṣma,
lying on his arrow-bed,
like an extinct fire,
is thinking of me –
and my mind was also
drawn towards him.

12 My mind was concentrated
on the man
the twang of whose bowstring
is so fierce
that it terrifies even Indra,
the rājā of the gods.

13 My mind was concentrated
on the man
who singlehanded routed
the maṇḍala of rājās
and carried away
the three princesses of Kāśi.

14 My mind was concentrated
on the man
whom even Bhārgava Paraśurāma
could not defeat
after a duel that went on
for twenty-three days.

15 My mind was concentrated
on the man
who with singleminded discipline
concentrated his senses
and, focusing his thinking on me,
sought my refuge.

16 O lord of the earth!
Tāta! My friend!
Gaṅgā's son, weaned by her,
Vāsiṣṭha's pupil –
my mind was concentrated
on that man.

17 My mind was concentrated
on the man
of brilliant mahā-energy,
master of celestial weapons,
wise in the Vedas
and Vedāṅgas.

18 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
My mind
was concentrated on him,
the favourite disciple
of Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma,
and all-knowledge knower.

19 My mind was concentrated on him,
O bull-brave Bharata,
who knows past and present
and future,
who is the most excellent
of all knowers of dharma.

20 When tiger-among-men Bhīṣma's karma
takes him to heaven,
Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira,
this earth
will become as dark
as a moonless night.

21 Which is why, Yudhiṣṭhira,
I urge you to go
to Gaṅgeya-Bhīṣma
of fierce prowess,
and humbly place before him
your questions and doubts.

22 O ruler of the earth!
Four *vidyās*: dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa;
Four yajñas: *hotā, udgāta, brahmā, adhvaryu*;
Four āsramas: *brahmacarya, gṛhastha, vānaprastha, saṁnyāsa;* and everything about rāja-dharma –
Go to him, and ask him.

23 When the formidable Kaurava sun Bhīṣma
sets,
then you will see the setting
of all knowledge –
which is why I urge you
to go to him now."

24 To these inspiring words
of Vāsudeva-Krishna,
wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira,
in a voice
choked with emotion,
said to Janārdana-Krishna:

25 "O Mādhava-Krishna!
All that you say
of the glory of Bhīṣma
is true.
I have not the slightest doubt
about that.

26 O mahā-radiant one!
I have heard
also from mahātmā Brahmins
how mahā-noble
and glorious
Bhīṣma is.

27 O destroyer of enemies!
Delighter of the Yādavas!
You are the Creator
of the universe.
How can anyone doubt
what you say?

28 O Mādhava-Krishna!
Since you wish
to favour us,
with you leading us
we will all go
to Bhīṣma.

29 O mahā-muscled one!
When the reverence-worthy sun
starts its northward course,
Bhīṣma will leave this world.
Before that,
he surely deserves your ḍarshan.

30 Precious indeed
will be your darshan,
for you are
the primal destroyable
and undestroyable Deity,
you are the reservoir of Brahmā."

31 Madhusūdana-Krishna heard
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and said to Sātyaki
standing near him,
"Ready my chariot."

32 Sātyaki quickly left
Keśava-Krishna,
went to Dāruka
and said to him:
"Yoke the chariot
of Krishna."

33 As instructed by Sātyaki,
Dāruka readied the chariot –
a splendid vehicle,
profusely adorned with gold,
moon-gems and sun-gems,
gold-filigreed wheels,

34 Sun-bright,
swift-speeding,
studded with gems
in the centre,
excellent exterminator
of enemies,
with beautiful war-flags,
and Tārkṣya-Garuḍa
as war-flag emblem,

35 Pulled
by mind-swift horses,
Sugrīva and Śaibya
and two more;
and after yoking
this gold-glittering vehicle,
O lion-like rājā-Janamejaya,
Dāruka,
with palms folded in *añjali*,
stood before Krishna.

SECTION FORTY-SEVEN

1 "Lying on the bed of arrows,"
asked Janamejaya,
"what yoga did the Bharata Pitāmaha Bhīṣma practise
to take leave of his body?"

2 O tiger-brave rājā of the Kauravas!
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
listen with pure, single-minded attention
to how Bhīṣma renounced his body.

3 O ruler of the earth!
When the southern course of the sun
ended, and the sun,
in the bright phase
of the eighth *tithi* of Māgha,
in the Rohiṇi constellation,

4 Entered the northern course
of its solstice,
Bhīṣma concentrated
all the energies
of his ātman
in the Ātman.

5 His body pierced
with hundreds of arrows,
like the sun with its rays,
surrounded by Brahmins,
Bhīṣma blazed
with indescribable splendour.

6 Wise-in-the-Vedas Vyāsa,
the celestial ṛṣi Nārada,
Devasthāna, Vātsya,
Aśmaka,
as well as
Sumantu,

7 Jaimini,
mahātmā Paila,
Śāṇḍilya,
Devala,
and wise
Maitreya,

8 Āsita,
Vasiṣṭha,
mahātmā Kauśika-Visvāmitra,
Hārita,
Lomaśa,
learned Ātreya,

9 Bṛhaspati, Śukra,
mahā-muni Cyavana,
Sanatkumāra, Kapila,
Vālmīki,
Tumburu,
Kuru,

10 Maudgalya,
Bhārgava Paraśurāma,
mahā-muni Tṛṇabindu,
Pippalāda,
Vāyu, Saṁvarta,
Pulaha, Kaca,

11 Kaśyapa, Pulastya,
Kṛatu,
Dakṣa, Parāśara,
Marīci, Aṅgiras,
Kāśya, Gautama,
the muni Gālava,

12 Dhaumya, Vibhāṇḍa,
Māṇḍavya,
Dhaumra,
Kṛṣṇānubhautika,
finest-of-Brahmins Ulūka,
mahā-muni Mārkaṇḍeya,

13 Bhāskari, Pūraṇa, Krishna,
supreme-in-dharma Sūta –
all these
and many more
mahā-fortune-favoured
mahātmā munis,

14 Full of *śraddhā*, self-restraint
and peace of mind,
surrounded Bhīṣma,
like the moon by stars.
Lion-brave Bhīṣma,
in thought, word and karma,

15 Lying on his bed of arrows,
with a pure heart,
palms folded in *añjali*,
invoked Krishna.
He burst into ecstatic praise
of Madhusūdana-Krishna

16 The lotus-ravelled Lord of Yoga,
Viṣṇu, Jiṣṇu,
Jagat-pati Lord of the universe.
With palms folded in *añjali*,
incomparably eloquent,
strongest-of-the-strong

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17 Bhīṣma, the supreme dharmātmā,
sang the praises
of Vāsudeva-Krishna:
"O Krshna!
This adoration in words
that I offer

18 Be the words many, be they few,
O finest-of-men
Puruṣottama-Krishna,
be pleased with my offering.
O Pure One! O Goal of Purity!
O Supreme Haṁsa-Swan!

19 O Supreme Ruler Parameṣṭhin!
With my ātman
united with the Universal Ātman,
I seek your refuge, O Prajāpati!
O Brahmā without beginning or end,
neither gods nor ṛṣis know you.

20 Only the Creator Bhagavān Nārāyaṇa-Hari
knows you.
And through Nārāyaṇa,
the hosts of ṛṣis,
and Siddhas,
and mahā-*uraga* Nāgas,

21 And gods and deva-ṛṣis
know you
as the Supreme Undecaying One.
But even the gods,
Dānava antigods, gandharvas, yakṣas,
rākṣasas and Pannagas

22 Do not know who this Bhagavān is,
and from where he comes.
All the creatures
of the world
proceed from him,
and all enter into him.

23 Like pearls threaded on a string
are guṇa-made creatures
threaded in the Lord of creatures.
Like flowers
strung on a strong
everlasting thread,

24 This world of false and real
is strung on the limbs
of the World-Creator Viśvakarma,
thousand-headed Hari,
thousand-footed
and thousand-eyed,

25 Thousand-armed, thousand-crowned,
and dazzling
with a thousand faces.
Such is the divinity
called Nārāyaṇa,
the World-Refuge Viśva-Parāyaṇa –

26 Subtlest
of the subtle,
grossest of the gross,
heaviest of the heavy,
and finest
of the fine.

27 Vāk-mantras, Anuvāk-Brāhmaṇa-Veda-texts,
Niṣad-Veda-rituals
and the Upaniṣads and truth-speaking Sāmas
say you are Truth
and also Truth-in-practice
Satyakarmā.

28 O four-ātmaned Divinity – named
Vāsudeva, Saṁkarṣaṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha –
representing
Brahma, *jīva*, mind, and consciousness –
this is how the pious adore in secret
the Divine Lord of the faithful.

29 He is the tapasyā
of those who have tapasyā –
he is tapasyā personified.
Ātman of all,
All-knowledge, All-knower, All-Creator,
All-in-all.

30 Like fire produced by rubbing two sticks,
you were born,
O Divine One,
from Devaki-devī and Vasudeva
for the welfare of all
who have faith in Brahma-knowledge.

31 Transcending the selfish yearnings
of the body,
renouncing ill-deeds,
seeking spiritual liberation,
inseeing, O Govinda-Krishna,
the Ātman in the ātman,

32 I seek refuge
in the Lord of creatures Prajāpati,
more glorious than Vāyu and Indra,
more radiant than the sun,
beyond the grasp of *buddhi*-intellect,
beyond the senses and mind.

33 O Puruṣa of the Purāṇas!
Adorable One!
Brahmā at the start of a yuga!
Adorable One!
Saṁkarṣaṇa at the end of a yuga!
Adorable One!

34 O One Ātman, yet many!
O Adhokṣaja
Lord of the cosmos!
You who are worshipped
in various rituals by *bhaktas*!
O satisfier of desires!

35 O Treasure of the Universe!
 You in whom
all creatures find stable shelter!
 O Cosmic Ocean
on whose waves skim the worlds
 like so many birds!

36 Eternal-Order-of-the-Cosmos Ṛta!
 O Undecaying One Ekākṣara!
O Transcender of Sat and Asat,
 without beginning, middle or end,
beyond the grasp
 of men and ṛṣis!

37 O Adored One
 of sense-restrained gods and antigods,
Siddhas, ṛṣis and mahā-*uragas*!
 O Remover
of all sorrows!
 O Birthless and Deathless Deity!

38 O Eternal Self-Born Divinity!
 Devātma-yoni Sanātanaṁ!
O Invisible!
 O Ineffable!
Hari-Nārāyaṇa!
 Prabhu-Lord!

39 O Creator of the universe!
 Viśvasya-kartāraṁ!
Lord of the world!
 O Imperishable Witness
of the world!
 O Supreme Goal!

40 O gold-complexioned deity!
 Born in Aditi's womb,
Destroyer of Daitya antigods!
 One, and yet twelve Ādityas!
I namaskāra the Ātman of the Sun,
 Sūryātmane namaḥ!

41 I namaskāra the Ātman of the Moon,
  Somātmane namaḥ!
Gratifier of the gods with *amṛta*
  in the bright fortnight,
of the *pitṛs* in the dark fortnight,
  rājā of the twice-born!

42 I namaskāra the Ātman of the Hotṛ,
  Hotrātmane namaḥ!
Whose mouth is the sacred fire,
  whose body is the world,
who is the sole relisher
  of sacred oblations.

43 O inconceivably radiant Puruṣa
  beyond the darkness
of mahā-*tamas* ignorance!
  To know whom
is to be deathless,
  I namāskāra that Ātman of self-knowing.

44 I namāskāra the Ātman of the Vedas,
  Vedātmane namaḥ!
To whom are chanted praises
  as the chief *adhvaryu* in the *uktha* yajña,
whom Brahmins adore
  as Brahmā himself.

45 I namaskāra the Ātman of Yajña,
  Yajñātmane namaḥ!
Whose abode is Ṛk, Sāma, and Yajur
  whose ātman is the five libations,
whose warp and woof
  are the seven mantras.

46 I namaskāra the Ātman of Homa,
  Homātmane namaḥ!
Four, four, two, five, and two
  are seventeen *homa* monosyllables:
āsrāvāya, astu śranṣaṭ, yaja,
  ye yajāmaha, vaṣaṭ.

47 I namaskāra the Ātman of Śrotra,
Śrotrātmane namaḥ!
Who is the Veda Puruṣa Yaju,
with Gāyatri and other mantras as limbs,
the three Vedas as heads,
and gratifiers the Rathantara and Bṛhat chants.

48 I namaskāra the Ātman of Haṁsa,
Haṁsātamane namaḥ!
You are the Ṛṣi who appeared
as the gold-winged Swan
in the thousand-year sacrifice performed
by the World-Creator.

49 I namaskāra the Ātman of Vāk,
Vāgātmane namaḥ!
Speech whose limbs are sentences,
whose joints are *saṁdhis*,
ornaments vowels and consonants, –
Vāk the Divine Word itself!

50 I namaskāra the Ātman of Vīrya,
Vīryātmane namaḥ!
Valour which appeared as a boar
whose limbs
are yajña-sacrifice,
for the welfare of the world.

51 I namaskāra the Ātman of the Devas,
Devātmane namaḥ!
All the resplendent gods –
Viśvas, Maruts,
Rudras, Ādityas, Aśvins, Vasus,
Siddhas and Sādhyas.

52 I namaskāra the Ātman of Tattva,
Tattvātmane namaḥ!
Unmanifested matter, *buddhi*-intellect,
ahaṁkāra, mind,
the subtle senses,
rudimentary *tan-matra*-elements.

[XII:47:53-58]

Transcreated by P. Lal

53 I namaskāra the Ātman of Bhūta,
Bhūtātmane namaḥ!
Phenomena of past, present and future,
primal phenomena
and final phenomena,
the latest phenomena of life.

54 I namaskāra the Ātman of Sūkṣma,
Sūkṣātmane namaḥ!
The subtle phenomena
that is known by the wise,
the subtlest of the subtlest
which is Brahman.

55 I namaskāra the Ātman of Matsya,
Matsyātmane namaḥ!
Who assumed the form of a Fish
and entered the Rasātala underworld
and swiftly retrieved the Vedas
for Viriñca-Brahmā.

56 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kūrma,
Kūrmātmane namaḥ!
Who assumed the formidable form of a Tortoise
and allowed Mandara mountain
on its back to be used
for the churning of *amṛta.*

57 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kroḍa,
Kroḍātmane namaḥ!
Who assumed the form
of the Varāha-Boar,
and with his tusk redeemed
the hill-filled earth.

58 I namaskāra the Ātman of Siṁha,
Siṁhātmane namaḥ!
Who assumed the form of the Man-Lion
to redeem the worlds
from the fearful depredations
of Hiraṇyakaśipu.

59 I namaskāra the Ātman of Krānta,
Krāntāmane namaḥ!
Who assumed the form of the Dwarf
and with the help of māyā
subdued Bali
and measured the three worlds with his feet.

60 I namaskāra the Ātman of Rāma,
Rāmātmane namaḥ!
Finest-of-all-arms-wielders,
Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma
who rid the world
of Kṣatriyas.

61 I namaskāra the Ātman of Krodha,
Krodhātmane namaḥ!
Wrathful-ātmaned Paraśurāma
who over-killed twentyone times
all Kṣatriyas
who transgressed dharma.

62 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kṣatra,
Kṣatrātmane namaḥ!
Who assumed the form
of Daśaratha's son Rāma
and killed in battle Rāvaṇa
of the Pulastya race.

63 I namaskāra the Ātman of Bhoga,
Bhogātmane namaḥ!
Rohiṇī's son Balarāma,
wielder of plough and club,
radiantly attired
in a blue dress.

64 I namaskāra the Ātman of Krīdā,
Krīḍātmane namaḥ!
Vasudeva's son Śrīmān Krishna,
playing games
in Nanda's Gokula,
and slayer of Kaṁsa.

65 I namaskāra the Ātman of Krishna,
Krishnātmane namaḥ!
Dressed in yellow silk,
wielder of the conch,
cakra and Śārṅga-bow,
Vanamalādhara forest-flower-garlanded.

66 I namaskāra the Ātman of Brahmā,
Brahmātmane namaḥ!
Who became the charioteer of Arjuna
and gave him the deathless nectar
of Gītā-*amṛta*
for the good of the three worlds.

67 I namaskāra the Ātman of Buddha,
Buddhātmane namaḥ!
Who after disciplining the Dānava antigods,
and achieving Buddhahood,
will become
the saviour of the world.

68 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kalki,
Kalkyātmane namaḥ!
Who riding a horse
will arrive in the Kali-yuga
to wipe out the Mlecchas
and restore dharma.

69 I namaskāra the Ātman of Mukhya,
Mukhyātmane namaḥ!
Who killed the Dānava bull-brave Kālanemi
in the battle of Taramaya,
and restored his kingdom
to Mahendra-Indra.

70 I namaskāra the Ātman of Śākṣī,
Śākṣyātmane namaḥ!
Who is the Eternal Witness
in all living creatures,
the Akṣara-Imperishable
in the Kṣara-Perishable.

71 Namo'astu, Mahādeva!
Namaste, Bhakta-vatsala!
Subrahmanya-Viṣṇu,
I namaskāra you!
Be gracious to me,
O Parameśvara!

72 Sahasrākṣa thousand-eyed,
Maheśvara of all the worlds, Nārāyaṇa!
O Amṛta!
O Golden-Navelled One!
O Yajña-Personified!
O Universe-Faced Divinity!

73 O Radiant One!
O Unmanifested and Manifested
Pervader of all!
O Lotus-Eyed
Finest-of-men Puruṣottama,
I seek your grace.

74 He in whose heart resides
the Lord of the gods
Deveśa Hari-Nārāyaṇa –
blessed is he,
blessed are his deeds,
never unblessed is he.

75 Blessed is Bhagavān Viṣṇu,
blessed
is Madhusūdana-Krishna,
blessed is the Lotus-Eyed One,
blessed is Garuḍa-*dhvaja*,
the flag of Garuḍa.

76 I namaskāra the Ātman of Satya,
Satyātmane namaḥ!
Whose effort is to build a bridge of truth
to cross the mortal world,
whose conduct
is always based on dharma.

77 I namaskāra the Ātman of Dharma,
Dharmātmane namaḥ!
All who follow Dharma,
all who receive the fruits of Dharma,
all who revere
different forms of Dharma.

78 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kāma,
Kāmātmane namaḥ!
The bodiless desire
that gives birth to bodies,
the intoxicating passion
propelling all creatures.

79 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kṣetra,
Kṣetrātmane namaḥ!
The Unmanifested in the manifested,
the Ideal of mahā-ṛṣis,
The Kṣetrajña Knower-of-the-field
who dwells in the field of the body.

80 I namaskāra the Ātman of Sāṁkhya,
Sāṁkhyātmane namaḥ!
In the three guṇas: sattva, rajas, tamas;
in sixteen forms: eleven senses and five elements;
seventeenth: Puruṣa.
Such is Sāṁkhya.

81 I namaskāra the Ātman of Yoga,
Yogātmane namaḥ!
Who has conquered sleep,
subdued the senses,
and who sees the inner light
shining bright.

82 I namaskāra the Ātman of Mokṣa,
Mokṣātmane namaḥ!
Whom saṁnyāsīs have attained,
transcending pure and impure,
freed from fear of rebirth,
established in *śānti*-serenity.

83 I namaskāra the Ātman of Ghora,
Ghorātmane namaḥ!
The fierce conflagration
after a thousand yugas,
doom and dissolution
consuming all creatures.

84 I namaskāra the Ātman of Māyā,
Māyātmane namaḥ!
All creatures consumed,
the world a watery waste,
and a small baby lying
on a floating leaf . . .

85 I namaskāra the Ātman of Padma,
Padmātmane namaḥ!
From the navel of lotus-eyed
Self-Born Brahmā
springs
the lotus of creation . . .

86 I namaskāra the Ātman of Yoga-nīdra,
Yoga-nīdrātmane namaḥ!
Thousand-headed!
Radiant Puruṣa in the ātman!
Four-ocean-vast absorber of all
in inner peace of Yoga-sleep!

87 I namaskāra the Ātman of Toya,
Toyātmane namaḥ!
Cloud its hair! Water!
Rivers its limbs! Water!
The four oceans its stomach!
Water!

88 I namaskāra the Ātman of Hetu,
Hetvātmane namaḥ!
Birth and death and change!
Cause!
All things ending
at the day of doom! Cause!

[XII:47:89-94]

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89 I namaskāra the Ātman of Draṣṭā,
Draṣṭātmane namaḥ!
Not sleeping at night,
watching in the day! Observer!
Good or bad, always there!
Observer!

90 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kārya,
Kāryātmane namaḥ!
Nothing you cannot achieve
with dharma at your side! Work!
You are the personification
of Vaikuṇṭha itself! Work!

91 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kraura,
Kraurātmane namaḥ!
Twentyseven times
were the Kṣatriyas slaughtered
in overkill genocide
for transgressing dharma! Cruelty!

92 I namaskāra the Ātman of Vāyu,
Vāyvātmane namaḥ!
Five are the *prāṇa*-breaths
that breathe life
in every creature of the world.
Wind!

93 I namaskāra the Ātman of Kāla,
Kālātmane namaḥ!
With your yoga in every yuga
you appear
as months, seasons, half-years, years,
and the final dissolution.

94 I namaskāra the Ātman of Varṇa,
Varṇātmane namaḥ!
Brahmins your mouth,
Kṣatriyas your arms,
Vaiśyas your stomach,
Śūdras your feet . . .

95 I namaskāra the Ātman of Loka,
Lokātmane namaḥ!
Fire your mouth, heaven your head,
ākāśa-space your navel,
sun your eye, the directions your ears!
The world!

96 I namaskāra the Ātman of Viśva,
Viśvātmane namaḥ!
Beyond Cosmic Time Kāla,
beyond yajña, beyond beyond,
beyond birth,
beyond any kind of beginning . . .

97 I namaskāra the Ātman of Vahni,
Vahnyātmane namaḥ!
The fire in lightning,
the Pāvaka fire that purifies,
the fire
that burns and devours! Fire!

98 I namaskāra the Ātman of Goptra,
Goptrātmane namaḥ!
According to the Vaiśeṣika,
those who are trapped
in the guṇas of the material world –
you are their protector Goptra.

99 I namaskāra the Ātman of Prāṇa,
Prāṇātmane namaḥ!
Who becomes food, drink, and fuel,
and increases
the rasa and prāṇa life-breath
of the world's creatures.

100 I namaskāra the Ātman of Pāka,
Pākātmane namaḥ!
Who becomes chewable, suckable,
lickable and drinkable food,
and the stomach-heat that digests it
and nourishes life.

101 I namaskāra the Ātman of Darpa,
Dṛpātmane namaḥ!
The pride of red-eyed and red-maned,
sharp-toothed-and-nailed
Half-Man Half-Lion who killed
the Indra-of-Dānavas Hiraṇyakaśipu.

102 I namaskāra the Ātman of Sūkṣma,
Sūkṣātmane namaḥ!
The Supremely Subtle
whom neither gods nor Gandharvas
nor Daitya nor Dānava antigods
can fully know.

103 I namaskāra the Ātman of Vīrya,
Vīryātmane namaḥ!
The Virile Gravity
of radiant Śrīmān Bhagavān Ananta
who from the Rasātala underworld
keeps the world steady.

104 I namaskāra the Ātman of Moha,
Mohātmane namaḥ!
The delicate delusions
of love and attachment
that create the bonds
for life's propagation and protection.

105 I namaskāra the Ātman of Jñāna,
Jñātmane namaḥ!
Knowledge of the ātman
that is sheathed in the five elements,
that knowledge
by which enlightenment is attained.

106 I namaskāra the Ātman of Divya,
Divyātmane namaḥ!
That infinite-bodied celestial one,
whose inseeing eyes
perceive everything,
who is the vastness of endlessness.

107 I namaskāra the Ātman of Brahmā,
    Brahmātmane namaḥ!
O personified one
    with matted hair and staff
and shrunk stomach,
    whose begging bowl is his quiver.

108 I namaskāra the Ātman of Rudra,
    Rudrātmane namaḥ!
O three-eyed Trident-Wielder!
    O Mahātmā!
Ash-smeard Lord of the gods
    with erect liṅgam!

109 I namaskāra the Ātman of Ugra,
    Ugrātmane namaḥ!
Whose crown is the half-moon,
    snakes the sacred thread,
fierce *pināka*-bow
    and *śūla*-spear-wielder!

110 I namaskāra the Ātman of Śānta,
    Śāntāmane namaḥ!
Ātman of all creatures,
    Maker and Taker of life,
without wrath, without hatred,
    without delusion . . .

111 I namaskāra the Ātman of Sarva,
    Sarvātmane namaḥ!
In whom is all,
    who is in all,
who is everywhere,
    who is all in all . . .

112 O Viśvakarman World-Artificer!
    Namaste!
O Viśva-ātman! Ātman of the Cosmos!
    Viśva-sambhava!
Transcender of the five elements!
    O Ultimate Goal!

113

Namaste, O three-world-pervader!
Namaste,
O three-world-transcender!
Namaste,
O all-absorber,
pervader of all the directions!

114

Namaste, Bhagavān Viṣṇu!
Imperishable Origin
of all the worlds!
O invincible Hṛṣīkeśa!
You are the Maker and Breaker
of whatever there is.

115

I do not see your divine form
in the three worlds –
but I see the truth,
I see you
in your eternal form,
Rūpaṁ Sanātanaṁ.

116

O Sanātana Puruṣa!
Your head pervades heaven,
your feet pervade
the earth-devī Vasundharā,
your glory pervades
the three worlds.

117

Your arms the directions,
your eyes the sun,
your semen Śukra;
upright you stand,
stemming the seven-ways
free-flowing wind.

118

Never victims of fear are they
who namaskāra
Govinda of unfading glory,
who dresses
in a yellow robe
the colour of the *atsī*-flower.

119

One praṇāma to Krishna equals ten
post-Aśvamedha-yajña sacred baths.
Ten Aśvamedhas
will bring rebirth,
but a single Krishna-praṇāma
ends all rebirth.

120

Becoming one with Krishna are they
who with Krishṅa-vows
glorify Krishna, remembering Krishna
before sleeping at night and on waking –
as one with him
as mantra-chanted ghee in sacred fire.

121

I namaskāra Viṣṇu
who ferries one across
the whirlpool of saṁṣāra,
dispelling the terror of hell
with his maṇḍala
of protective grace.

122

I namaskāra Govinda,
protector of cows,
benefactor of Brahmins,
O one-without-a-second
Govinda-Krishna,
namo namaḥ!

123

To the *prāṇa*-persecuted,
saṁsāra-sorrow-stricken
world-wayfarers
seeking release from travel-travails,
the medicinal syllables are simple:
these two – Hari.

124

As truth is fragrant with Viṣṇu,
as the world is fragrant with Viṣṇu,
as everything
is fragrant with Viṣṇu,
so may I be fault-free fragrant
with Viṣṇu.

125 O Puṇḍarīkakṣa Lotus-Eyed One!
O Lord of the gods!
I am your bhakta.
I seek your grace.
Be gracious to me.
Fulfil me, O Lord!

126 O Divine One! O Janārdana!
I adore you with speech.
Speech be my yajña!
O not born of yoni
who are the yoni
of learning and tapasyā!

127 Nārāyaṇa
is the Supreme Brahman,
Nārāyaṇa is the supreme tapasyā.
Nārāyaṇa
is the Supreme Divinity,
Nārāyaṇa is all in all."

128 Bhīṣma ended his eulogy
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
and said, "I namaskāra Krishna."
With those words,
he again
prāṇama-ed Krishna.

129 Intuiting by the power of yoga
Bhīṣma's bhakti,
Mādhava-Krishna infused in him
celestial inseeing-darshan
of the three worlds.
Then Hari-Krishna left.

130 Whom yogis cherish in their hearts
when the time comes
for leaving the world –
that Hari-Krishna
was Bhīṣma's vision when, life fructified,
he gave up his *prāṇa*.

131 Bhīṣma was silent.
Tears choking their voices,
the Brahman-knowers
around him
chanted profuse praises
of mahā-minded Bhīṣma.

132 Excellent Brahmins all of them,
they extolled the glory
of Puruṣottama-Keśava-Krishna;
then, gently,
again and again they sang the praises
of Bhīṣma.

133 Intuiting the bhakti-yoga
of Bh[illegible]
supreme-among-men
Puruṣottama-Krishna rose
and happily climbed
into his chariot.

134 In one chariot
were Keśava-Krsihna
and Sātyaki;
in the other,
the two mahātmās –
Yudhiṣṭhira and Dhanañjaya-Arjuna.

135 In the third chariot
were Bhīma
and the twins,
followed by Kṛpa,
Yuyutsu,
and the Sūta foe-crushing Sañjaya.

136 All the bull-brave heroes
drove in chariots
that looked like cities,
and the earth shuddered
with the noise
of the chariot-wheels.

137 And Brahmins sang his praises
as he passed by,
and finest-of-men, slayer-of-Keśini Krishna
listened happily,
palms joined in *añjali*;
and praṇāma-ing as he went.

138 Who repeats, studies or listens
to this eulogy of Śārṅga-bow-wielding
Yādava-delighting Krishna,
is freed of ill-deeds,
and becomes one with Janārdana-Krishna
after leaving his body.

139 This rājā-of-eulogies *stavarāja*
chanted by Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma
glorifying wonderful Viṣṇu –
this song of praise
has the power to overcome
even mahā-powerful criminals.

140 This rājā-of-eulogies can also redeem
the worst criminals.
Who with a pure heart studies
this song of praise
transcends even the eternal worlds,
and becomes one with Amṛtaṁ Mahā-Ātman.

SECTION FORTY-EIGHT

1 Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna, rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Kṛpa and others,
and the four other Pāṇḍavas,

2 Riding in city-large,
beautifully beflagged chariots
pulled by swift-speeding horses,
drove towards Kurukṣetra.

3 They reached the battlefield,
still littered
with the hair and marrow
and bones
of mahātmā Kṣatriyas
who perished on Kurukṣetra.

4 Hill-high heaps of corpses
of elephants
and horses everywhere;
everywhere heaps
of human skulls
like so many conch-shells.

5 Thousands of makeshift pyres
still smouldering,
thousands of mounds of armour
and war-weapons –
an abandoned veritable banquet hall
of Kāla.

6 The mahā-chariot-heroes
drove through
the battlefield of Kurukṣetra,
haunted by *bhūta*-sprits
and hordes
of rākṣasas.

7 As they proceeded, mahā-muscled
delighter-of-the-Yādavas Krishna
said this
to Yudhiṣṭhira
about the glory
of Jamadagni's son Paraśurāma:

8 "Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
See in the distance
the five lakes known as 'Rāma-hlada'
which Paraśurāma filled
with Kṣatriya blood
to gratify his *pitṛ*-ancestors.

9 It was this very place
where *prabhu*-lord Paraśurāma
accomplished his mission
of ridding the earth
of the Kṣatriya caste
twentyone times over."

10 "I find it hard to believe
what you say,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"that he rid the earth
of all Kṣatriyas
twentyone times over.

11 O bull-brave Yādava Krishna
of limitless renown!
If the genocide was so successful,
all Kṣatriyas exterminated,
how is it that there is still
the Kṣatriya caste?

12 O bull-brave Yādava Krishna!
Tell me:
Why did mahātmā bhagavān Paraśurāma
massacre
the Kṣatriyas,
and how did they revive?

13 O finest of eloquent speakers!
The entire earth
must have been littered
with crores of corpses
of Kṣatriyas
killed in chariot-combats.

14 O tiger-brave Yadava Krishna!
What could have been the reason
that made mahātmā
Bhārgava Paraśurāma
indulge in such overkill of Kṣatriyas
in Kurukṣetra?

15 O Vāsava-Indra's younger brother!
O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
O Tārkṣeya-Garuḍa-flagged hero!
Tell me this,
for you know even more
than the sacred *āgama*-texts."

16 And so, *prabhu*-lord Krishna,
Gada's elder brother,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
narrated in detail,
to Yudhiṣṭhira
of wondrous energy,
how the entire earth
came to be covered
with the corpses
of Kṣatriya warriors.

SECTION FORTY-NINE

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna replied:
Son of Kuntī!
Listen to what I have heard
from mahā-ṛṣis
about the birth, valour and glory
of Paraśurāma;

2 How the son of Jamadagni
massacred crores
of Kṣatriyas,
and how the dynasty
of Bharata rājās
was again revived.

3 O ruler of the earth!
Jahnu had a son named Aja.
Aja's son was Balākāśva.
Balākāśva's son was dharma-devoted Kuśika.

4 Kuśika was like thousand-eyed
Sahasrākṣa-Indra.
In order to obtain an invincible son,
a veritable lord
of the three worlds,
he practised severe tapasyās.

5 Impressed by the severe tapasyā,
thousand-eyed
destroyer-of-cities Puraṁdara-Indra,
intending
to grant the king's desire
for a worthy son –

6 Pākaśāsana Pāka-slayer Indra,
Lokeśvareśvara
Lord-of-the-world-lords Indra
decided, O rājā,
to himself become Kuśika's son
known as Gādhi.

7 *Prabhu*-lord rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
Gādhi had a daughter
named Satyavatī.
Gādhi gave his daughter
in marriage
to Bhṛgu's son Ṛcīka.

8 O delighter of the Kauravas!
Bhārgava Ṛcīka
was so pleased with her purity
that, to give her, and Gādhi, a son,
he prepared for her
sanctified *caru*-food.

9 Bhārgava Ṛcīka called
his wife and said:
"Eat a portion
of this *caru* yourself,
and give the rest
to your mother.

10 The son born to your mother
will be a radiant
bull-brave Kṣatriya
whom no Kṣatriya will defeat,
and who will destroy
mighty bull-brave Kṣatriyas.

11 O gracious lady!
The *caru* that you eat
will give you an incomparable
Brahmin son,
a patient, serene child
devoted to tapasyā."

12 Saying this to his wife Satyavatī,
delighter-of-the-Bhargavas
Śrīmān Bhṛgu-nandana Ṛcīka
went away
to a forest
to practise tapasyā.

13 Around this time, king Gādhi,
who had gone
with his wife on a pilgrimage
of sacred rivers,
arrived with her
at Ṛcīka's āshram.

14 Satyavatī happily, O rājā,
gave to her mother
both portions of the *caru*
and repeated to her
all that her husband
had told her.

15 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Satyavatī's mother
unknowingly gave her portion
to Satyavatī,
and kept Satyavatī portion
for herself.

16 In the womb of Satyavatī
was conceived
a baby of dazzling glory,
a fearsome boy
who would in time become
the exterminator of Kṣatriyaṣ.

17 Tiger-brave Bhārgava Ṛcīka
divined the child
in her womb,
and the Brahmin
said to his goddess
graceful wilfe:

18 "Auspicious lady! Your mother
has substituted the *caru*.
She has deceived you.
Your son will be
a man of wrath
and cruel karma.

19 Your brother will be a Brahmin
of supreme tapasyā.
In the *caru*-portion for you
I had infused
the mahā-energy
of the cosmic Brahmā,

20 And in the *caru*-portion
for your mother
I had infused Kṣatriya virility.
Auspicious lady!
What will happen now
will be the complete reverse.

21 Your mother's son
will be a Kṣatriya,
your son a Brahmin."
Mahā-fortune-favoured Satyavatī
heard her husband
say this,

22 And she touched his feet
with her head,
and she said to him:
"*Bhagavan*! Revered one!
Prabhu-lord! No!
No Brahmin-defiler son for me!

23 "Auspicious lady!" replied Ṛcīka.
"I did not intend
such a son for you.
Your fierce son
is the result of the substitution
of the *caru*."

24 "O muni! O *Prabhu*-lord!"
said Satyavatī.
"You can create whole new worlds
if you wish.
Why not give me a gentle,
peace-loving son?"

25 "Auspicious lady!" replied Ṛcīka.
"I have never,
even in jest, spoken a lie.
How can I falsify
the mantra-charged *caru* I invoked
before the sacred fire?

26 I knew in advance by the power
of my tapasyā
that all the children
of your father,
O auspicious lady,
would be Brahmins."

27 "Very well, *Prabhu*-lord,"
said Satyavatī.
"O finest of chanters of *japa*!
Let our grandson be whatever,
our son should be
a man of peace."

28 "O lovely-complexioned lady!"
replied Ṛcīka.
"I see no difference
between a son and a grandson.
Auspicious lady!
It will be as you wish."

29 And so it was that Satyavatī
(continued Vāsudeva-Krishna)
gave birth to a Bhārgava son,
a boy of peace
and tapasyā and strict vows,
named Jamadagni.

30 And Kuśika's son Gādhi
got a son whose name
was Viśvāmitra,
who possessed all the Brahmin guṇas,
who was indeed
in every respect a Brahmin.

31 Ṛcīka's son Jamadagini
was a treasure house
of tapasyā.
And Jamadagni's son
was a fiercely
fearsome boy

32 Named Rāma-Paraśurāma,
an absolute master
of all branches of knowledge,
specially bowcraft,
a blazing Pāvaka-fire,
a Kṣatriya-exterminator.

33 Paraśurāma gratified
Mahādeva-Śiva
on Gandhamādana mountain,
obtaining marvellous weapons,
especially the fiercely radiant
paraśu-axe.

34

On the strength
of that blazing-like-fire
never-blunting axe,
the fame and prowess
of Paraśurāma
spread in all the worlds.

35

In the meantime,
Kārtavīrya's son,
a radiant Kṣatriya named Arjuna
became ruler
of the kingdom
of the Haihayas.

36

Granted a thousand arms
by the grace of ṛṣi Dattātreya,
mahā-energetic rājā Arjuna
became *cakravartī*-emperor,
and performed an Aśvamedha
at which Brahmins

37

Were given the entire earth
with its mountains and seven islands,
which this king
of supreme dharma
had conquered by the strength
of his thousand arms.

38

It so happened once,
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,
that famished and thirsty Citrabhānu-Agni
begged alms
from illustrious thousand-armed Arjuna,
which he gave.

39

Issuing in flames from the tips
of Arjuna's arrows,
Citrabhānu-Agni
flashed through the kingdom,
consuming villages, towns, cities
and entire provinces.

[XII:49:40-45]

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40 Propelled by the mahā-energy
and prowess of Indra-among-men
Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
Agni
began devouring mountains
and forests.

41 Fanned by the wind,
helped by the Haihaya king,
Citrabhānu-Agni proceeded
to reduce to ashes
the secluded āshram
of mahātmā Āpava.

42 O never-failing mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
Incensed
by the destruction of his āshram
by Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
wondrously valiant Āpava
cursed him, saying:

43 "You have not spared
even my mahā-forest.
O Arjuna! For this crime,
your thousand arms
will be sliced in battle
by Paraśurāma."

44 O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira!
Arjuna was a king
of mahā-energy, powerful,
always calm, brave,
charitable, good to Brahmins,
protecting shelter-seekers.

45 He ignored the curse cast on him
by the mahātmā.
That is how his sons
became the cause
of the murder
of their father.

46 O bull-brave Bharata!
O Yudhiṣṭhira
They were cruel.
They were proud.
They were violent.
One day the princes
Ran off
With the sacred calf
Of Jamadagni.

47 This happened
Without the knowledge
Of Kārtavīrya-Arjna,
The Indra-like ruler
Of the Haihayas.
As a result,
A clash took place
Between mahātmā Paraśurāma
And Kārtavīrya-Arjuna.

48 In that clash, enraged Paraśurāma,
son of Jamadagni,
lopped off the thousand arms
of Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
and brought back to his āshram
the calf that was roaming,

49 O Indra-among-rājās,
in the inner apartments.
All the sons
of Kārtavīrya-Arjuna,
devoid of reason,
utterly foolish,

50 Were so gripped by stupidity
that they rushed
to mahātmā Jamadagni's āshram
and, O earth-ruler,
with *bhallā*-arrows
they severed his head from his body.

51 Illustrious Paraśurāma was away
at the time,
gathering fuel and kuśa-grass.
The slaughter of his father
infuriated Paraśurāma
beyond words.

52 Revenge-driven Paraśurāma
vowed to rid the earth
of Kṣatriyas,
and brandished his weapon.
By wondrously valiant lion-brave Paraśurāma,
Kārtavīrya's

53 Sons and gradsons –
all of them –
were systematically exterminated.
Not only that,
by vindictively slaughtering
thousands of Haihayas,

54 Bhārgava Paraśurāma turned the earth,
O rājā,
into a blood-drenched quagmire.
Ridding the earth
of all Kṣatriyas,
mahā-energetic Paraśurāma

55 Was overcome by pity,
and retired
to a secluded forest.
It so happened,
after many thousands
of years,

56 That Paraśurāma,
hot-headed by nature,
began regretting his decision.
Viśvāmitra's grandson,
Raibhya's son,
a man of mahā-tapasyā

57 Named Parāvasu, started going around,
mahārāja,
publicly accusing Paraśurāma,
saying, "When Yayāti fell from heaven,
were not the saintly
who gathered at a yajña –

58 Pratardana and others – were they not,
O Paraśurāma,
Kṣatriyas by birth? O Paraśurāma!
Hollow is your vow
telling all that you have killed
all Kṣatriyas.

59 If you ask me,
you are afraid of Kṣatriya warriors,
so you run and hide on a hill-top.
The earth
is teeming again
with hundreds of Kṣatriyas."

60 The taunt of Parāvasu
made Bhārgava Paraśurāma
take up arms again.
The hundreds of Kṣatriyas,
O rājā,
that he had earlier spared

61 Had multiplied, and had become
mahā-valiant rulers of the earth.
Once again,
O ruler of men,
Paraśurāma slaughtered them,
including even children.

62 The earth was littered
with the corpses of babies
still in the womb.
No sooner
than a Kṣatriya baby was born,
Paraśurāma killed it.

63 Only a handful of Kṣatriya mothers
succeeded
in saving their newborn.
Emptying the earth of Kṣatriyas
twentyone times over,
Prabhu-lord Paraśurāma

64 Offered the earth
as an Aśvamedha-yajña *dakṣiṇā*-gift
to Kaśyapa.
To save the lives
of the remaining Kṣatriyas,
Kaśyapa,

65 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
holding the *sruk*-sacrificial ladle
in his hand, said:
"O mahā-muni!
Go to the shore
of the southern ocean.

66 You cannot, Paraśurāma,
stay in my kingdom."
And so it was
that the ocean
opened a territory
called Śūrpāraka

67 For Jamadagni's son,
also known as Aparānta-mahitala,
the Other-Shore-Region.
Mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
Kaśyapa accepted the earth
as a gift,

68 And, handing it over to Brahmins,
he went away
to a mahā-forest.
After that,
Śūdras and Vaiśyas,
with unbridled freedom,

69
Began, O bull-brave Bharata,
molesting the wives
of Brahmins.
Anarchy gripped the earth,
the powerful persecuted
the powerless.

70
Oppressed and exploited,
the Brahmins
lost their glory.
The earth,
violated by Kāla-corrupted,
ill-ātmaned men,

71
Slid slowly
into the underworld of Rasātala.
There were
no dharma-protecting Kṣatriyas left
to protect
the powerless earth.

72
Seeing the fear-stricken earth
sinking
into the lower depths of Rasātala,
mahā-minded Kaśyapa
checked her slide by receiving her
on his *uru*-thighs.

73
Because he took her in his *uru*-lap,
the earth
is also known as Urvī.
Because she needed
to be protected,
the earth asked

74
Kaśyapa for a boon.
The devī said:
"Give me an earth-lord.
I have, O Brahmin,
hidden many Kṣatriyas among women –
bull-brave Kṣatriyas.

75 All of them were born, O muni,
in the Haihaya dynasty.
All of them can protect me.
Apart from them,
Prabhu-lord,
is the son of Paurava Vidūratha,

76 Who was brought up by bears
on the mountain
called Ṛkṣavat.
Moved by compassion,
incredibly energetic
and yajña-devoted

77 Parāśara looked after the son
of Saudāsa –
a Brahmin son, born a *dvija*,
yet he does
all the work
that is a Śūdra's duty –

78 And is famous as Sarvakarman,
the All-Work-Doer.
May that earth-lord protect me!
Another survivor
is Śibi's mahā-radiant son
named Gopati,

79 Who was brought up by cows,
O muni, in a forest.
May he protect me!
The name
of Pratardana's mahā-powerful son
is Vatsa,

80 Who was brought up by calves
in a cowshed.
May that earth-lord protect me!
The grandson
of Dadhivāhana,
the son of Diviratha,

81 Was brought up on the bank
of the Gaṅgā
by Gautama:
a brilliantly blessed boy Bṛhadratha,
a boy of mahā-energy,
lavishly talented,

82 Brought up by long-tailed
lāṅgūla-baboons
on Gṛdhrakuta mountain.
Many Marutta
Kṣatriya boys
have also survived;

83 As brave as the Marut-lord
Indra himself,
they were brought up by the ocean.
All these Kṣatriya boys
are safe
but in scattered places,

84 Living secure lives
among artisans and goldsmiths.
Should they decide to come
to my rescue,
I will once again
become stable.

85 Poor children!
Their grandfathers and fathers
were massacred by Paraśurāma
of cruel karma,
needlessly slaughtered
in battle.

86 O mahā-muni! It is my duty to see
their funeral rites are performed.
I do not wish to be protected
by any others than these.
Please arrange to have everything
returned to normal – is my wish."

87 And so (continued Vāsudeva-Krishna)
in accordance
with the earth's desire,
Kaśyapa called all those Kṣatriya earth-rulers,
and installed them
in their respective kingdoms.

88 The sons and grandsons
of those Kṣatriyas
constitute the present royal dynasties.
All this happened much earlier.
You asked about it,
O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

89 Speaking to Yudhiṣṭhira (said Vaiśampāyana).
the finest-of-dharma-knowers,
the supreme Yādava hero, mahātmā Krishna
proceeded
in his chariot,
dazzling like Bhagavān Arka, the Sun.

SECTION FIFTY

1 Listening to the feats of Paraśurāma
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira was spellbound,
and said to Janārdana-Krishna:

2 "O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!
The prowess of mahātmā Paraśurāma,
who rid the world of Kṣatriyas,
equals that of Śakra-Indra.

3 Marvellous how all those excellent
Kṣatriya boys
tormented by Paraśurāma,
were saved
by the ocean, cows, baboons,
bears and *vānaras*.

4 Aho! Marvellous is this world
of humans,
and fortunate too,
to witness such a deed of dharma
performed
by a Brahmin, Paraśurāma!"

5 *Tāta*! Friend! Dear Janamejaya!
Absorbed in conversation,
Acyuta-Krishna of unfading glory
and Yudhiṣṭhira
reached the spot where Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma
lay on his arrow-bed.

6 They saw Bhīṣma supine
on his bed of arrows,
radiating splendour
like the eveing sun
bathed in a network
of sunset-rays.

7 Like Śatakratu-Indra of a hundred sacrifices
worshipped by gods,
Bhīṣma lay on the bank
of the river-of-dharma Oghavatī,
surrounded
by countless munis.

8 Seeing him from a distance,
Krishna
and wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira,
the other four Pāṇḍavas,
Śāradvata's son
Kṛpa,

9 All alighted from their chariots,
and, subduing their restless minds,
and controlling
with one-pointed strength their senses,
they approached
mahā-muni Bhīṣma.

10 Govinda-Krishna,
Sātyaki and other earth-lords
paid their respects to Vyāsa
and the great ṛṣis;
having done that,
they faced Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma.

11 All those bull-brave men,
the Yādava
and Kaurava elders,
looked at Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma,
and sat down,
surrounding him.

12 But Keśava-Krishna
was a little perturbed
seeing Gaṅgā's son lying there
like an almost extinguished fire,
and he said
to Bhīṣma:

13 "O most fluent of eloquent speakers!
Is your clear mind
as percipient as always?
And your *buddhi*-intellect,
as unwavering
as always?

14 And your body –
is it still in pain
from all those arrows?
Mental pain is worse –
it debilitates
the body.

15 *Prabhu*-lord! Your father Śāntanu,
always-devoted-to-dharma,
gave you the boon of choosing
the time of your death.
Your father granted this boon,
not I.

16 How the body suffers
when pricked
with even the tiniest thorn!
And you, O earth-lord,
have been pierced
by swarms of arrows!

17 But pain is for lesser mortals,
O Bharata descendant.
You have the śakti
to advise even the gods
about the mysteries
of Being and Becoming.

18 O bull-brave Bhīṣma!
You excel all
in knowledge.
In you reside
the secrets of past,
present and future.

19 O mahā-wise one!
O ocean of dharma!
You know all
about the death of life,
you know all
about the fruits of dharma.

20 You managed a kingdom,
you were perfectly healthy,
no hint of illness.
Surrounded thousands of girls,
you remained an *ūrdhvareta*,
a semen-sublimating celibate.

21 O lord of the earth!
Apart from
firm-in-truth, mahā-valiant
and heroic,
devoted-to-dharma Bhīṣma,
in the three worlds is none

22 Who, lying on a bed of arrows,
on death's brink,
by sheer power of tapasyā
has the will
to decide his own death.
(O *tāta* Janamejaya!)

23 In truth, in tapasyā,
in liberal gift-giving,
in yajña-performance,
in bowcraft, in the Vedas,
in politics,
in sheltering the shelter-less,

24 In never harming others,
in purity, self-control,
in seeking the welfare of all,
I have never heard
of any mahā-chariot-hero
to equal you.

25 There is no doubt at all
that, singly fighting
in a single chariot,
you can rout gods,
gandharvas, antigods, yakṣas
and rākṣasas.

26 O maha-muscled Bhīṣma!
Among Vasus
you are Vāsava-Indra.
Brahmins say
you are the guṇa-glorious
ninth Vasu.

27 I know who and what you are,
O Supreme-among-men Puruṣottama!
O Puruṣottama,
your śakti is such
that you are extolled
even by the gods.

28 O Manuṣyendra! Indra-among-men!
I have never seen,
I have never heard of any man
in this world
who is your equal
in guṇa-virtues.

29 O rājā! With all your guṇas,
you excel even the gods.
With your tapasyā
you can create
all the moving and unmoving life
of the universe.

30 What need be said then of your power
to create worlds
of just physical guṇas?
Tormented
by the slaughter
of his kith and kin

31 Is Pāṇḍu's eldest on Yudhiṣṭhira.
O Bhīṣma!
Cure him of his grief.
O Bharata descendant!
The dharmas relating
to the four castes

32 And the four āśrama-stages
of one's life –
they are all known to you.
The four branches of knowledge,
the four *hotṛs*,
O Bharata descendant,

33 The Eternal Dharmas enshrined
in Yoga
and Sāṁkhya philosophies,
and what goes against dharma
in the duties
of the four castes –

34 Which all people are aware of –
O Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma,
all this you know fully,
and *pratiloma*-marriage
of high-caste bride
and low-caste bridegroom,

35 Along with knowledge of dharmas
of different lands,
communities and families,
and, of course,
what the Vedas say
and learned men say.

36 You know in their entriety
the Itihāsas
and the Purāṇas.
Always enshrined
in your mind
are the Dharma-śāstras.

37 O bull-brave hero!
There is none in this world
who can pierce
and clarify
the problems
created by this material world.

38 O Indra-among-men!
With your wisdom
dispel the grief of Yudhiṣṭhira.
Only a man with vast
and varied wisdom like you
can destroy delusion and bring peace."

SECTION FIFTY-ONE

1 Bhīṣma heard the words of wise
Vāsudeva-Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
raised his head a little,
joined his palms in *añjali*,
and replied:

2 "Namaste! Bhagavan Krishna!
I namaskāra you,
O World-Creator-and-Destroyer!
O Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna,
you are the invincible origin and end
of the universe!

3 Namaste! O World-Maker!
O World-Ātman, World-Evolver!
O Transcender of the five elements!
O Ultimate Goal of life!

4 Namaste! O Three-World-Pervader!
Namaste!
O Three-World-Transcender!
Namaste!
O Yogeśvara, Lord-of-Yoga!
O Refuge of all!

5 What you have said about me,
O finest of men,
has enabled me to see
your Divine Presence
that suffuses the life
of the three worlds.

6 I see your Sanātana Form,
O Govinda-Krishna!
Assuming the form
of the illimitably energetic wind,
you sweep through
the seven paths.

[XII:51:7-12]

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7 You head pervades the sky,
your feet
the earth devī,
your arms the directions,
your eyes the sun,
your semen all *śukra*-virility.

8 O Krishna of unfading glory,
Acyuta divinity
dressed in yellow
like the *atasi*-flower,
you dazzle
like a lightning-charged cloud.

9 I am your bhakta,
seeking your grace.
O lotus-eyed Puṇḍarīkākṣa,
O finest of the gods,
advise me
what is best for me."

10 "O bull-brave rājā!"
said Vāsudeva-Krishna.
"I have granted you a vision
of my celestial form
because your bhakti for me
is so profound.

11 O Bharata descendant!
O Indra-among-rājās!
Without bhakti,
or insincere bhakti,
without peace-of-mind śānti,
my ātman-darshan is not possible.

12 You are indeed my bhakta.
You are sincere.
You have self-restraint,
tapasyā, truth,
liberal gift-giving,
and purity.

13 O world-ruler! O Bhīṣma!
Your tapasyā alone
will give you my darshan.
Waiting for you
are the worlds
from where is no return.

14 O finest-of-Kauravas Bhīṣma!
Left to you
are fiftysix days.
The fruits of your karma
will take you to auspiciousness
when you leave your body.

15 Look, the gods, the Vasus,
and radiant Agni
are waiting, invisible, in chariots
for the start
of the northern solstice,
and for you to come to them.

16 O finest
of the finest of heroes!
When the Kāla-controlled
Bhagavān Sun
proceeds from the southern
to the northern path,
you will reach the worlds
from where the learned
never return to this world.

17 O valiant Bhīṣma!
When you disappear
in those worlds,
knowledge will disappear
from this world.
That is why
they are all gathered here
to listen to you
discourse on dharma.

[XII:51:18; 52:1-4]

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18 Firm-in-truth Yudhiṣṭhira
is desperate,
sorrow-stricken by the slaughter
of his race.
Speak to him,
explain to him
the truths
of dharma, artha and samādhi,
and dispel his grief."

SECTION FIFTY-TWO

1 Listening to the words
of Krishna
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
beneficial words
of dharma and artha,
Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
joined his palms in *añjali*
and said:

2 "Lokanātha! Lord of the world!
O mahā-muscled one!
O Śiva! Nārāyaṇa! Acyuta!
Listening to you,
I am as if drowning
in an ocean of joy.

3 But what is there left for me
to say in your presence?
Whatever there is to say
has already been said
in the words
that you have spoken.

4 O divine Krishna!
Whatever is done
wherever in this world,
whatever is worth doing,
is the result of wisdom
that comes from you.

5 Only the person who dares explain
the world of heaven
before the rājā-of-the-gods Indra
is entitled to explain,
in your presence,
the meaning of dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa.

6 O Madhusūdana-Krishna!
The arrows in my body
have so affected
my mind
that my limbs are weak,
my thinking unclear.

7 O Govinda-Krishna!
Like fire,
like poison are these arrows
in the body –
I lack even the strength
to speak.

8 I feel myself going limp.
My life-breath
is ready to leave me.
My nerves
are all aflame.
My mind is blurred.

9 My tongue sticks to my palate.
How will I speak?
O enhancer of Dāśārha-glory!
O Dāśārha-kula-vardhana!
Bear with me.
Be gracious to me.

10 O mahā-muscled Krishna!
Pardon me
if I do not say anything.
O Acyuta-Krishna!
Bṛhaspati is speechless in your presence.
Who am I?

11 O Madhusūdana-Krishna!
    I cannot make out
even the directions, the sky,
    the earth.
I am still breathing,
    only because you are here.

12 It is you who should speak
    to Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
for you
    are the sacred text
that supersedes
    all sacred texts.

13 You are the World-Maker, Krishna,
    the Eternal One.
How can one like me speak
    with you present?
How can a disciple speak
    better than a guru?"

14 "Very well have you said
    what you have said,"
replied Vāsudeva-Krishna.
    "O formidable Kaurava!
O mahā-valiant, mahā-patient,
    all-meaning-diviner!

15 Prabhu-lord Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma!
    For the agony
of the arrow-wounds
    afflicting your body,
accept from me
    this boon I give you.

16 No debility, no confusion,
    O son of Gaṅgā!
No burning, no pain.
    Nor will you
experience any hunger
    and thirst.

17 O defectless one!
All knowledge
will shine in you.
Nothing will be beyond
the grasp
of your *buddhi*-intellect.

18 Like the cloud-emancipated moon,
your mind, Bhīṣma,
freed from tamas-confusion
and rajas-passion,
will shine for ever
with the dazzle of sattva.

19 Your *buddhi* will grasp
with complete insight
any subject
connected with dharma
and any matter
dealing with artha.

20 O limitlessly illustrious one!
O tiger-brave rājā!
You will gain divine insight
into sweat-born,
egg-born, seed-born,
and womb-born life.

21 Like fish seeing clearly
in translucent water,
your *jñāna-cakṣu*
knowledge-vision
will see the world's
teeming life."

22 That gathering of mahā-ṛṣis,
including Vyāsa,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
adored Krishna
with verses from the Ṛg,
Yajur and Sāma Vedas.

23 And suddenly perennial flowers
rained from the sky
on the spot where stood
Vārṣṇeya-Krishna,
with the Pāṇḍava brothers,
beside Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma.

24 And musical instruments
sounded,
scores of apsarās sang.
Nothing inauspicious,
nothing disagreeable,
was anywhere visible.

25 And a breeze began blowing –
holy and happy
and fragrant and pure.
Peace on all sides,
peaceful the birds,
peaceful the beasts.

26 The suddenly, like a fire
setting a forest aflame,
the thousand-rayed
Bhagavān Sun
the Day-Maker
began to set in the west.

27 The mahā-ṛṣis rose,
and asked permission
to depart
from Janārdana-Krishna,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira
and Bhīṣma.

28 The Pāṇḍavas,
Keśava-Krishna,
Sātyaki,
Sāradvata-Kṛpa
and Sañjaya
praṇāma-ed the mahā-ṛṣis.

29

Offered pūjā-respect in this manner,
 the delighting-in-dharma
mahā-ṛṣis said,
 "We will return tomorrow."
With these words,
 they left.

30

And Keśava-Krishna
 and the Pāṇḍavas also
sought Gāṅgeya-Bhīṣma's permission,
 and, doing *pradakṣiṇa* around him,
they drove away
 in their splendid chariots.

31

Accompanying them
 were gold-*Kūbara*-decorated chariots,
hill-huge elephants,
 Suparṇa-Garuḍa-swift horses
and foot-soldiers armed with bows
 and other weapons.

32

That massive army,
 in front of the chariots
and behind them,
 was a spectacle
as awe-inspiring
 as the Mahānadī river,
near Ṛkṣavanta mountain,
 splitting into two currents,
one going east, one west.

33

Then rose in the sky
 Bhagavān Niśākara
the Night-Making Moon,
 delighting the soldiers,
and restoring sap-*rasa*
 to the mahā-plants
and other vegetation
 whose guṇas had been sucked dry
by the Day-Maker
 Davākara-Sun.

34 And the bull-brave
Yādava Krishna,
with the Pāṇḍavas,
entered Hastināpura,
a city fit for gods,
and proceeded
to their magnificent mansions,
like lords-of-the-jungle lions,
exhausted, to their mountain caves.

SECTION FIFTY-THREE

1 Madhusūdana-Krishna
went straight to bed
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and slept peacefully.
Half a *yāma*-period
was still left for daybreak
when he woke.

2 Focusing all his faculties
of knowledge-absorption
in dhyāna-meditation,
Mādhava-Krishna
immersed his energies
in the Eternal Brahman.

3 Sweet-voiced panegyrists,
well-versed in praises
from the Purāṇas,
sang the glory of World-Creator,
Lord-of-the-people Prajāpati
Vāsudeva-Krishna.

4 Some clapped hands,
and chanted praises;
others sang songs;
and thousands sounded
mṛdaṅga-durms,
and blew conch-shells.

5 What beautiful melodies emerged
from *paṇava*-drums
and vīṇās and flutes!
The mansion of Krishna
was a magical medley
of musical joy.

6 From the mansion
of rājā Yudhiṣṭhira also
floated waves
of auspicious sweetness
on wings of songs
and musical instruments.

7 The never-fading-in-glory Dāśārha
Acyuta-Krishna
rose, bathed, and,
intoning the secret mantra,
hands joined in *añjali,* mahā-muscled Krishna
stood before the sacred fire.

8 Gifting a thousand cows
to a thousand Brahmins
learned in the four Vedas,
Mādhava-Krishna
requested them
to chant benedictions.

9 Then, after touching
various auspicious articles,
Krishna beheld himself
in a spotless mirror;
then, turning to Sātyaki,
he said:

10 "Grandson of Śini!
Be so good as to go
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and find out
if the mahā-energetic monarch
is ready to meet Bhīṣma."

11 Acting on the request
of Krishna,
Sātyaki quickly went
to rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
and said
to him:

12 "O rājā! The chariot
of wise Vāsudeva-Krishna is ready.
Janardana-Krishna
will soon be going
to meet river-born
Āpageya-Bhīṣma.

13 O mahā-radiant
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira!
Krishna is ready
and waiting.
Please do
what should be done."

14 "O incomparably radiant Phālguna-Arjuna!"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Yoke my excellent chariot.
No need for the army
to go with us today.
We will go by ourselves.

15 We must take care not to disturb
finest-of-dharma-knowers Bhīṣma.
Which is why,
Dhanañjaya-Arjuna,
I do not want
even the advance guard today.

16 Son of Kuntī! Bhīṣma, Gaṅgā's son,
will discourse today
on supreme secrets and mysteries.
I do not want
a miscellaneous crowd standing
and listening."

17 These were Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira's
words to Arjuna
after Sātyaki gave his message.
Kuntī's son
Dhananjaya-Arjuna
listened to Yudhiṣṭhira;

18 Bull-brave Arjuna then ordered
the excellent chariot
yoked and kept ready.
Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
the twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
Bhīma, Arjuna –

19 Like the five basic elements
of nature –
proceeded to Krishna's mansion.
Ahead of the arrival
of the mahātmā Pāṇḍavas,
Krishna,

20 In wise anticipation,
was ready in a chariot,
with Sātyaki.
From the chariots,
they exchanged greetings,
asking how the night had passed.

21 Then they all drove off,
in chariots
that boomed like thunder-clouds.
Balāhaka,
Meghapuṣpa, Śaibya,
and Sugrīva –

22 Vāsudeva-Krishna's charioteer
Dāruka urged
the four horses forward.
Encouraged by Dāruka,
those horses
of Vāsudeva-Krishna,

23 Speeding furiously, left indents
on the pliant earth
with their thudding hooves.
Mahā-powerful, wind-swift,
they seemed to gulp the sky
as they galloped,

24 And in no time at all
they reached Kurukṣetra,
the field of dharma,
at the spot
where Prabhu-lord Bhīṣma lay
on his bed of arrows.

25 Surrounded by mahā-ṛṣis,
Bhīṣma dazzled,
like Brahmā ringed by the gods.
Alighting from their chariots,
Govinda-Krishna,
Yudhiṣṭhira,

26 Bhīma, Gāṇḍīva-wielding Arjuna,
the twins Nakula and Sahadeva,
and Sātyaki,
raised their right hands
to show their reverence
for the gathered ṛṣis,

27 Like the moon surrounded by planets,
rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
surrounded by them,
approached Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma,
like Vāsava-Indra
approaching Brahmā.

28 Supine on his bed of arrows,
Bhīṣma looked like the sun
dropped, as it were, from the sky.
Yudhiṣṭhira looked
at mahā-muscled Bhīṣma.
Yudhiṣṭhira was shaking with fear.

SECTION FIFTY-FOUR

1 “Dharmātmā, mahā-valiant, firm-in-truth,
ātman-disciplined,” asked Janamejaya,
“Devavrata-Bhīṣma, mahā-fortune-favoured,
of unfading glory, lying on his arrow-bed,

2 A bed worthy of heroes, Śāntanu’s son Bhīṣma,
Gaṅgā’s son Bhīṣma,
tiger-brave hero, when Pāṇḍu’s sons
approached him respectfully –

3 When that galaxy of heroes
went to him,
after the massacre of armies
on the battlefield –
what did they say to each other,
tell me, O mahā-muni.”

4 When Bhīṣma, the formidable support
of the Kauravas,
lay on his arrow-bed, O king,
(replied Vaiśampāyana)
Siddhas and ṛṣis, led by Nārada,
came to him.

5 The rājās who survived the carnage
of Kurukṣetra,
along with Yudhiṣṭhira, Dhṛtarāṣṭra,
Krishna, Bhīma, Arjuna,
and the twin brothers
Nakula and Sahadeva –

6 All these Bharata mahātmās sadly
approached
Gaṅgā’s son Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
lying there
like the sun fallen from the sky,
and paid their respects.

7 Gifted-with-divine-insight Nārada
for a brief while
was lost in thought;
then, turning
to the Pāṇḍavas and surviving earth-rulers,
he said:

8 "O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
Gaṅgā's son
is about to set.
The time is ripe
now for you to ask Bhīṣma
your questions.

9 Before he gives up
his *prāṇa* life-breath,
place before him your questions,
for he knows all
about all dharmas,
and about the four castes.

10 He is old, and before he leaves
his body
and goes to the other world;
do this,
without wasting time.
Clarify your doubts."

11 Those lords-of-men heard Nārada
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and approached Bhīṣma.
Lacking the courage to speak,
they stood there silent,
looking at each other.

12 Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira looked
at Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
and said:
"Only Devakī's son Krishna
can question Pitāmaha Bhīṣma;
no one else.

13 O finest of the Yādavas!
Madhusūdana-Krishna!
You first. *Tāta*! Noble friend!
You are the one among us
who has knowledge
of all the dharmas."

14 Bhagavān Keśava-Krishna
of unfading glory,
acting on the suggestion
of Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
approached undefeatable Bhīṣma.
Vāsudeva-Krishna said:

15 "O finest of rājās!
Did you pass the night
happily?
Is your mind rested?
and your *buddhi*,
is it stable and clear?

16 O defectless Bhīṣma!
No pain in the heart,
no mental unease?
Does the radiance
of multi-form knowledge
shine serenely in you?"

17 "O Vārṣṇeya-Krishna!"
replied Bhīṣma.
"Through your grace,
my confusion, tiredness,
pain and weakness
have all disappeared overnight.

18 O supremely resplendent one!
I see clearly.
I see past, present and future
as clearly
as a fruit in the palm
of my hand.

19 O Krishna of unfading glory!
By the strength of your boon
I see clearly
the dharmas enshrined in the Vedas
and illumined
by the Vedānta-Upaniṣads.

20 O Janārdana-Krishna!
My heart throbs with the dharma
expounded by the virtuous and the learned.
Country-dharma,
community-dharma, family-dharma –
I see them all clearly.

21 Serenely ensconced in my heart
is the significance of the dharma
of the four stages of life.
O Keśava-Krishna!
Rāja-dharma also is now
perfectly clear to me.

22 Whatever needs to be said,
O Janārdana-Krishna,
that I will say.
Your grace has blessed my mind,
and auspiciously purified
my *buddhi*-intellect.

23 I have focused my mind on you,
O Janārdana-Krishna,
and I have become young again!
Your grace gives me
the strength to advise others
for their welfare.

24 What I want to know,
O Mādhava-Krishna,
is why you are not advising
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.
Tell me quickly –
why not you?"

25 Vāsudeva-Krishna replied:
"O Kaurava Bhīṣma!
I am the root of all glory,
all excellence.
What is, what is not –
everything comes from me.

26 What is so surprising in saying,
'Cool moonlight'?
What is so remarkable
about advice
provided by someone
who is so all-glorious?

27 O mahā-radiant Bhīṣma!
I have decided
to glorify your glory.
Which is why
I am infusing in you
my vast *buddhi.*

28 O ruler of the earth!
So long as this earth
remains firm and stable,
so long will your fame
spread and pervade
the three worlds.

29 Whatever you say in reply
to Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
O Bhīṣma, will be respected
in this world
as the very words
of the Vedas themselves.

30 And if anyone chooses to mould
his life
on the words you have spoken,
such a person
after death will receive the fruits
of meritorious deeds.

[XII:54:31-36]

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31 That is the reason, Bhīṣma,
 I have inspired you
with my divine will,
 so that your glory
grows and spreads
 the world over.

32 For there is no doubt at all
 that a person's fame
in the world beyond this world
 lasts only so long
as his glory grows and spreads
 in this world.

33 O rājā of the Bharatas!
 They are sitting
around you, the surviving rājās,
 all of them
seeking to be enlightened on dharma.
 Speak to them.

34 You are a revered elder,
 wise in *śruti*-values
and noble conduct,
 learned in the principles
of rājā-dharma
 and other duties as well.

35 From the time you were born,
 no one has ever
found any fault in you.
 These earth-lords,
all of them, say you know
 all the dharmas.

36 Advise them, O rājā,
 on the supreme values,
like a father advising his sons.
 You have always
revered the ṛṣis
 and the gods –

37 You are the ideal person
to guide them.
You cannot refuse to do this.
'If a good person
wishes to hear and know
about dharma

38 From a learned person,
he cannot be refused.'
So say the learned,
who know about dharma.
Prabhu-lord! Pain and blame afflict
the one who refuses.

39 Which is why you must clarify
Sanātana Dharma
to your sons and grandsons
who seek your advice.
O bull-brave Bharata!
Speak to them."

SECTION FIFTY-FIVE

1 Kaurava-nandana
Delighter-of-the-Kauravas
Kaurava-descendant Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
heard Krishna.
Then mahā-energetic Bhīṣma said:
"My mind is steady,
so is my power of speech.
I will elucidate
all the dharmas

2 Because I have been favoured
by your grace, O Govinda-Krishna,
the Eternal Ātman of all.
Let dharmātmā Yudhiṣṭhira ask
about dharma; I will gladly
speak about all the dharmas.

3 Let the mahātmā dharmātmā
son of Pāṇḍu
ask of me whatever he likes,
for at his birth
the hearts of rāja-ṛṣis
overflowed with joy.

4 Let Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira ask
whatever he likes,
for there is none his equal
in honourable fame,
not even among the most
dharma-devoted Kauravas.

5 Let Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira ask
whatever he likes,
for in him are patience,
self-control, brahmacarya,
fortitude, dharma,
splendour and energy.

6 Let Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira ask
whatever he likes,
because he always treats
with proper respect
relatives, guests, dependants
and shelter-seekers.

7 Let Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira ask
whatever he likes,
for in him are truth, charity,
tapasyā, valour,
śānti-serenity, dexterity,
and freedom from confusion.

8 Let Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira ask
whatever he likes,
for he is a dharmātmā
never impelled by kāma,
anger, fear, and selfishness
to do adharma.

9 Let Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira ask
whatever he likes,
he is always devoted to guests,
always truthfully and patiently and wisely
giving charity
to the good and deserving.

10 Let Pāṇḍu's son Yudhiṣṭhira ask
whatever he likes,
for he is devoted to sacrifices,
sacred studies,
and dharma and compassion,
and aware of the secrets of *śruti*."

11 "Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira is ashamed,"
said Vasudeva-Krishna.
"He is afraid
you will curse him.
So he hesitates
to approach you.

12 O lord-of-the-world Bhīṣma!
That earth-ruler has massacred so many,
he fears your curse.
So great is his fear,
he hesitates
to approach you.

13 Having pierced with arrows
the pūjā-worthy, the respect-worthy,
bhaktas and gurus and relatives
and the *arghya*-deserving,
he is afraid, so he hesitates
to approach you."

14 "Charity, sacred study and tapasyā
are the dharma of Brahmins,"
replied Bhīṣma.
"To fell bodies in battle, Krishna,
is the dharma
of Kṣatriyas.

15 It is in accordance with dharma
to kill fathers,
grandfathers, brothers, gurus
and other relatives
who have espoused the cause
of untruth.

16 A knower of his dharma
is the Kṣatriya
who, O Keśava-Krishna,
kills even gurus who,
motivated by greed and wickedness,
flout their calling.

17 A knower of his dharma
is the Kṣatriya
who kills in battle anyone
who, out of greed,
violates the values
of Sanātana Dharma.

18 A knower of his dharma
is the Kṣatriya who creates
a lake of blood on the battlefield
with hair its weeds,
elephants its huge rocks,
and war-flags its trees.

19 A Kṣatriya, roused to challenge
by a relative,
must always respond to it.
According to Manu,
this world and heaven are rewards
of a war of dharma."

20 Bhīṣma finished speaking
(continued Vaiśampāyana).
Dharma's son Yudhiṣṭhira
humbly stepped forward
and stood
before him.

21 He touched the feet
of Bhīṣma.
Happily and affectionately,
Bhīṣma smelt his head
and said to him:
"Sit here."

22 Finest-of-bowmen,
Gaṅgā's bull-brave son Bhīṣma,
said to Yudhiṣṭhira:
"*Tāta*! My son! Ask.
Ask freely, O incomparable Kaurava!
Do not fear."

SECTION FIFTY-SIX

1 Praṇāma-ing Hṛṣīkeśa-Krishna
and Pitāmaha Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and with the permission of his guru-elders,
the Kaurava descendant
began the question-session.

2 "Those who know dharma say
the dharma of a rājā
is the highest dharma.
I think it is a heavy burden.
Tell me about it, O earth-lord,"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.

3 "Pitāmaha! Tell me what is so special
about rāja-dharma.
Rāja-dharma is said to be the refuge
of the whole world.

4 O Kaurava! On rāja-dharma depends
the three-fold ideal
of dharma, artha and kāma.
It seems clear also
that the ideal of mokṣa depends
on rāja-dharma.

5 Horses need reins to check them,
elephants are checked
by iron hooks.
To keep the world in check,
one needs the dharma
of Indras-among-men rājās.

6 If confusion and doubt infect
the dharma
of rāja-ṛṣi kings,
disorder will grip the world,
and misery become the lot
of every human being.

7 The rising sun dispels the darkness
of the night.
In the same way,
rāja-dharma dispels
the inauspiciousnesses that harm
the life of human beings.

8 O finest of Bharatas!
Pitāmaha Bhīṣma!
O most excellent
of knowers of dharma!
Tell me all
about rāja-dharma.

9 O foe-chastising Bhīṣma!
From you alone
can we expect the deepest insight
into the sacred texts.
Vāsudeva-Krishna considers you
as supremely percipient."

10 "I namaskāra Mahā-Dharma!"
exclaimed Bhīṣma.
"I namaskāra all-holy Krishna!
I namaskāra Brahmins,
and I begin my discourse
on Sanātana Dharma.

11 Listen to me, Yudhiṣṭhira,
as I present
the details of rāja-dharma,
and listen also
to whatever else
you wish to hear.

12 O finest of the Kauravas!
To begin with,
in order to please his people,
a rājā should offer
traditional reverence to the gods
and respect to Brahmins.

13 O enhancer of Kaurava glory!
By revering gods
and respecting Brahmins,
a rājā is freed of his debt to dharma,
and earns the respect
of his subjects.

14 Yudhiṣṭhira my son!
Always strive hard.
Do your very best.
A rājā who depends
solely on fate
is doomed to fail.

15 Ordinarily speaking,
these two – fate and free-will –
are said to go together.
But free-will is superior.
You cannot choose fate.
Fate is always there.

16 The point is : No use grieving
if what's begun
is not full done, or gets undone.
The first duty
of a rājā is never to give up –
to always try again.

17 Nothing leads more to the success
of a rājā than truth.
Truth makes
a rājā happy in this life,
and blissful
in the next.

18 O Indra-among-rājās!
For ṛṣis also,
truth is the most precious wealth.
Nothing inspires trust
and confidence in a rājā
more than truth.

19 Prosperity will never desert
a rājā
who is talented, noble, disciplined,
gentle, dharma-devoted,
sense-controlled, goodlooking,
and liberal in gifts.

20 O delighter of the Kauravas!
It's good to be straightforward
in your dealings,
but be circumspect
with your weaknesses, your counsels,
and your plans.

21 A rājā who is always gentle
will get little respect,
a rājā excessively harsh
will invite positive dislike.
Let him try a balanced mix
of harsh and gentle.

22 O finest of givers of charity!
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
My son, you should never
punish Brahmins,
because Brahmins are the finest
of this world's creatures.

23 O Indra-among-rājās!
Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Mahātmā Manu has a song
consisting of two ślokas
which, for the sake of your dharma,
you should learn by heart:

24 'Fire is born of water,
Kṣatriya of Brahmin,
Iron of stone.
All three agitate others,
But are themselves calmed
By their progenitors alone.

25 When fire fights water,
Kṣatriya harms Brahmin,
Iron strikes stone,
The first three suffer,
Their victims are left
Safe and alone.'

26 That being so, mahārāja,
it shows why you
should always namaskāra Brahmins.
The finest Brahmins
should be revered;
they uphold the Brahma-Vedas on earth.

27 Nonetheless, O tiger-brave hero,
should a Brahmin
ever become a threat
to the three worlds,
he deserves to be crushed
by force of arms.

28 *Tāta*! Dear king! Mahārāja!
In the ancient past,
mahā-ṛṣi Uśanas-Śukra
sang two ślokas
concerning this, to which you
should listen carefully:

[XII:56:29-34]

Transcreated by P. Lal

29 ‘A Vedānta-wise Brahmin,
Should he lift a war-weapon
To strike you dead –
To safeguard dharma,
A Kṣatriya king’s dharma
Is to strike him dead.

30 It’s wrath blocking wrath.
A dharma-knowing king
Protects dharma this way.
He is free from blame.
He is not a violater
Of dharma, they say.’

31 O finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
Despite all that,
a Brahmin should be respected.
If found guilty,
he should preferably be exiled
from the kingdom.

32 O lord of the world!
Show compassion
even to a guilty Brahmin.
Brahmin-murder,
sleeping with a guru’s wife,
causing abortion,

33 Treason against a rājā –
no Brahmin should suffer
corporal punishment
for any of these crimes;
he should be banished
from the kingdom.

34 Men who have bhakti for Brahmins
are loved by all.
There is no greater treasure
for a rājā
than to have large assemblies
of such bhaktas.

35 Of the six forts listed in the sāstras, mahārāja,
– desert, water, land,
forest, mountain, people –
no fort excels
the security offered
by loyal and loving subjects.

36 Which is why a rājā
should specially cherish
all the four castes.
Only a truth-speaking dharmātmā rājā
can hope
to please his people.

37 This does not mean, my son,
to be lax and lenient all the time.
A mild rājā
is like a sentimental elephant,
and sooner or later
he will lapse into adharma.

38 There is a śloka about this
in the śāstra of Bṛhaspati,
in our tradition,
of the distant past.
Listen to it, mahārāja –
I will repeat it:

39 'Like an elephant-driver
On the elephant's head,
Lording everything,
A scheming person
Always takes advantage
Of a forgiving king.'

40 Like the sun in springtime,
not too hot
and not too cold –
so be the king,
not too mild,
and not too harsh.

41 Plain fact, sensible conjecture,
correct comparison,
the authority of sacred texts –
let these four, mahārāja,
be the basis of judging
friends and others.

42 O giver-away of lavish *dakṣiṇās*!
All bad habits
known as *vasanas* must be shunned.
Not always though;
what is important
is not to get addicted to them.

43 The world has little respect
for a king
who is addicted to *vasanas*.
A spiteful ruler
only excites resentment
among his subjects.

44 Mahārāja! A rājā's attitude
to his subjects
must be like that
of a pregnant mother
towards her unborn baby.
Let me explain.

45 Just as a pregnant mother
willingly sacrifices
things she loves
for the good of her baby,
a king must gladly do likewise
for his subjects.

46 O incomparable Kaurava!
A king
who is dedicated to dharma
must give up personal pleasure
for the collective happiness
of his subjects.

47 You must never, on any account,
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
lose patience.
Fear never troubles the king
who is patient,
and administers justice justly.

48 O finest of eloquent speakers!
O tiger-brave rājā!
Never be too familiar
and flippant with servants.
There is much harm in this.
Let me explain.

49 If you become too familiar
with dependants,
they lose respect for you.
They forget their station,
and flout the will
of their master.

50 They think twice, before doing
what they are ordered to do.
They blurt out secrets.
They ask for favours
they should not ask.
They also eat food on the sly.

51 They even lose their temper,
and try to out-do their master.
They take bribes.
They cheat.
They impede the progress
of the kingdom.

52 They corrupt the kingdom's economy
with forged documents.
They make love
to the female guards,
and strut about
in look-alike royal robes.

53 In the presence of the king,
they yawn and spit.
O tiger-brave rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
They become so shameless
as to crack jokes
in front of him.

54 O most excellent king!
If a ruler
is too gentle and casual,
they start using
his horses, elephants and chariots
as their own.

55 They hang around in the court
with their friends
and openly say: 'Rājā!
This job is too difficult for you.
What you are doing
is utterly wrong.'

56 If the king does not like it,
they laugh at him.
If he shows them pūjā-respect,
they are not impressed.
Not only that, they quarrel with him
in open court.

57 They give out his secrets,
they make public
his faults and misdeeds.
Without hesitation,
they disregard his orders,
doing as they like.

58 O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
In his presence,
they make fun of his dress,
his ornaments,
his food, his bathing and sleeping,
his body perfumes.

59 O descendant of Bharata!
They decry the task
entrusted to them,
and leave it undone.
Discontented with their salary,
they steal from the treasury.

60 They play with the rājā
as they would
with a bird tied to a string.
To the people they say:
'He depends on us.
He loves us.'

61 Yudhiṣṭhira! If a king becomes
too gentle and too casual,
all these problems
beset him.
And not only these –
many others too."

SECTION FIFTY-SEVEN

1 "Action and enterprise make a rājā,"
said Bhīṣma. "Yudhiṣṭhira,
a rājā is useless if he sits around
like a helpless woman.

2 Uśanas-Śukra has a śloka on this,
O lord of the world.
I will repeat it to you.
Listen carefully, O rājā.

3 'Like a snake swallowing rice
in a hole,
the earth swallows these two:
a rājā who will not fight a war,
a Brahmin
excessively attached to domesticity.'

4 O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
Keep this advice
always close to your heart.
Make peace
with the peace-deserving,
make war with the war-makers.

5 Guru or friend, kill anyone
who threatens the seven limbs
of your kingdom:
king, advisers, friends, treasury,
territory, forts,
and army.

6 O Indra-among-rājās!
In the distant past,
rājā Marutta sang a śloka,
approved by Bṛhaspati,
regarding the authority
of a rājā:

7 'A guru who flouts
Norms of good conduct
Through arrogant lust,
Not doing to-be-done,
Doing not-to-be-done –
Punish him you must.'

8 Bahu's son, the supremely wise
rājā Sāgara
banished his eldest son
named Asamañjas
because Sāgara desired the welfare
of his subjects.

9 It was the whim of Asamañjas,
O king Yudhiṣṭhira,
to catch hold of city children
and drown them in the Sarayū;
so his father
rebuked and banished him.

10 And ṛṣi Uddālaka renounced
the son he dearly loved,
Śvetaketu of mahā-tapasyā,
because Śvetaketu
misbehaved with Brahmins
and lied to them.

11 The Sanātana Dharma of a rājā
is to ensure
the happiness of his people,
to defend and cherish truth,
to be simple
and sincere.

12 Not misappropriate others' wealth.
Give what should be given
when it should be given.
Valour, truth-speaking, patience.
These are the path
of royal success.

13 Ātman-disciplined, anger-controlled,
worldly pursuits guided
by śāstra-principles,
cherishing the ideals enshrined
in dharma, artha,
kāma, and mokṣa,

14 Knowledgeable in the three Vedas,
never revealing secrets –
these are what make a rājā.
And Indras-among-men
are the rājās whose supreme concern
is the welfare of their people.

15 It is the duty of a rājā
to protect the dharmas
of the four castes.
It is his Sanātana Dharma
to ensure that dharma-intermixture
does not take place.

16 Trust no one. Do not trust completely
even the trustworthy.
Discriminate the good and bad
of the six kingly duties:
war, peace, marching, halting,
diplomacy, and ally-seeking.

17 Praised is the king who routs
his enemies,
who knows dharma, artha and kāma,
who gets access
to an enemy's secrets
through bribes and spies.

18 His treasury should be overflowing,
in justice like Yama, in wealth like Kubera.
Advisers, kingdom, forts, treasury, punishment –
his five, and his enemy's, five – make ten.
If his five excel his enemy's, he prospers;
if his enemy's five excel his, he declines.

19 He should attend to the needs
of the needy,
and replenish continuing charities.
A king must always smile,
conversing with him
always be pleasant.

20 He must always respect
the elderly.
He must discipline his senses,
give up greed,
emulate the virtuous, be contented,
dress elegantly.

21 Let him never covet the wealth
of the honest.
Wealth should be taken
from the dishonest,
and passed on
to the honest.

22 Let him be personally responsible
  for declaring war,
for giving charity,
  for control of his ātman,
for timely gifts, for enjoyments,
  for noble conduct.

23 The valiant, the bhaktas,
  the loyal,
the noble-born, the disease-free,
  who keep company with the good,
the self-respecting
  who respect others,

24 Those who love learning,
  those who are worldly-wise,
those who are other-worldly-wise,
  those who cherish dharma,
those whose goodness is rock-stable,
  who keep an eye on enemies –

25 A rājā should seek their help,
  and give them positions
in his kingdom.
  Only his royal umbrella
and authority
  make him different from them.

26 Whether they are present or absent,
  a king's behaviour
with them must be the same.
  Never will he suffer –
the Indra-among-men king
  who follows this ideal.

27 The king who suspects everybody
  and exploits everybody
will find that his wickedness
  and greed
bring death on him
  at the hands of his own men.

28 But the ruler who makes
his people's welfare
his main concern, never fails;
even if he does,
he soon finds followers
coming to his rescue.

29 The anger-free ruler,
devoid of debased habits,
who never punishes disproportionately,
who controls his senses,
will find Himālayan faith
reposed in him.

30 Wise, fair in dispensation of justice,
quick to take advantage
of others' weaknesses,
pleasing in appearance and looks,
sensitive to the needs
of the four castes,

31 Quick in taking decisive action,
victorious over anger,
gracious and mahā-minded,
healthy, enterprising,
never self-praising,
encourager of religious rituals,

32 Recognised as one who completes
whatever projects he initiates,
vigorously working
towards their success –
such a rājā can be acclaimed
as the finest of rājās.

33 A rājā in whose kingdom
subjects live fearlessly
like sons
in their father's house –
such a rājā deserves acclaim
as the finest of rājās.

34 A rājā in whose kingdom
subjects do not hide their wealth,
and know the difference
between law and lawlessness –
such a rājā deserves acclaim
as the finest of rājās.

35 A ruler in whose kingdom
law and order prevail,
and people do their sva-karma
well-protected,
following the tradition,
contented and disciplined,

36 Engaged in teaching and learning,
staying away
from noisy and quarrelsome disputes,
happily busy
with charitable work –
he is a real ruler.

37 In a kingdom conspicuous
by the absence
of wickedness and cheating
and māyā and envy –
in the kingdom of such a ruler
is Sanātana Dharma.

38 Only that rājā is fit
to rule a kingdom
who honours learning and the learned,
who seeks others' welfare,
who treads the path of the good
and the selfless.

39 Only that rājā is fit
to rule a kingdom
whose spies, advisers,
to-be-implemented plans
and secret plans
are not known to his enemies.

40 O descendant of Bharata!
In the distant past,
mahātmā Bhārgava Śukra
sang a śloka
about royal conduct,
the rāja-*carita*:

41 'First find a rājā.
Then get a wife.
Then wealth, they say.
Without a rājā –
Your wife and wealth,
What good are they?

42 There is only one Sanātana Dharma
for a rājā
who wishes to rule a kingdom:
the welfare of his subjects.
Such welfare
preserves the world.

43 O Indra-among-rājās!
The Manu Prācetas
has two ślokas
on rāja-dharma.
Listen to them
with single-minded attention:

44 'Avoid these six as you would
a leaking ship
on an ocean:
an ācārya who does not speak,
a *ṛtvik*-priest ignorant
of the sacred texts,

45 A rājā who cannot protect,
a nagging wife,
a cowherd
who hangs around a village,
and a barber who lives
in a forest.' "

SECTION FIFTY-EIGHT

1 “Yudhiṣṭhira!”
said Bhīṣma.
“What I have given you
is the cream
of the milk
of rāja-dharma.
This is the dharma of justice
that receives
the highest praise
of bhagavān Bṛhaspati.

2 The large-eyed Bhagavān Viśālākṣa,
Kāvya-Śukra
of mahā-tapasyā,
tousand-eyed Sahasrākṣa
Mahendra-Indra,
Pracetas’ son Manu,

3 Bhagavān Bharadvāja,
the muni Gauraśira –
all devoted to Brahman
and speakers of Brahman-truth –
all have given insights
into rāja-śāstra.

4 O finest of knowers of dharma!
O Rājīvatāmrākṣa
copper-colour lotus-eyed Yudhiṣṭhira!
All praise the rājā as protector.
Let me explain
how a rājā protects.

5 Yudhiṣṭhira! Exmploying spies,
appointing ambassadors,
paying salaries in time, ungrudgingly,
collecting taxes properly,
never appropriating revenue
with whimsical authority,

6 Rewarding the honest and virtuous,
showing courage and skill,
speaking the truth,
and seeking the peoples' welfare,
cleanly or crookedly sowing discord
among his enemies,

7 Repairing and renovating
decaying and dilapidated buildings,
caring for the poor and distressed,
inflicting physical punishment
and financial penalty
befitting the crime committed,

8 Never neglecting the pious and honest,
associating
with those of noble birth,
accumulating only
what needs to be accumulated,
honouring the learned,

9 Pleasing the army with rewards
and promotions,
always adding to everyone's welfare,
cheerfully accepting hardships
that accompany plans,
augmenting the treasury,

10 Arranging for the full security
of the capital,
fomenting disaffection among people
of a hostile city,
keeping an eye on friends and allies
in enemy territories,

11 Keeping a strict check
on servants and officials,
discreetly distrusting
one's own people in power,
lulling the enemy's officials
with assurances,

12 Observing diligently the rules
of the dharma of politics,
alert and and always prepared
for action,
never under-estimating an enemy,
never being unārya-ignoble . . . .

13 According to Bṛhaspati, preparedness
for an Indra-among-men rājā
is all in all,
the root of rāja-dharma.
Listen to what some ślokas
say about this.

14 'It's *utthāna,* splendid effort,
that produced amṛta,
it's splendid effort that routed
the antigods,
and gave Mahendra-Indra lordship
over earth and heaven.

15 Work-hero is superior
to word-hero.
Word-heroes delight
work-heroes
by singing
their praises.'

16 No matter how shrewd
and clever the rājā,
without splendid effort
he's a venomless snake,
an all-too-easy target
for his enemies.

17 Even a powerful king must learn
never too under-estimate an enemy,
however weak.
A tiny spark makes a giant fire;
a drop of poison
is enough to kill.

18 With one wing of his fourfold army
of horses, chariots, elephants
and foot-soldiers,
an enemy can overrun a fort
and wreak havoc in the kingdom
of a rājā.

19 The secret plans of a rājā,
the army
he mobilises for victory,
the desires
he hides in his heart,
even if ignoble –

20 Let him carefully conceal them
with a show
of transparent simplicity.
For real glory,
he should always abide
by principles of dharma.

21 Mahā-complex is ruling a kingdom,
possible only by one
with an inflexible ātman.
A rājā too gentle
will collapse under the strain
of the splendid effort.

22 A kingdom is like a dish
of delicious meat
which everyone wants to enjoy.
It needs delicate handling.
It needs, Yudhiṣṭhira,
a mix of soft and hard.

23 To face calamity in the course
of ruling his people
is magnificent dharma for a king.
This is the way
a ruler should behave
and discharge his duties.

24 O incomparable Kaurava!
What I have listed
is only a small part
of rāja-dharma.
What else is there
that you would like to know?

25 Bhagavān Vyāsa, Devasthāna,
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
Aśma, Vāsudeva-Krishna,
Kṛpa,
Sātyaki,
and Sañjaya

26 Heard the discourse
of lion-among-men
finest-of-dharma-knowers Bhīṣma.
Their faces happy like flowers,
they said: "Sādhu! Sādhu!
Excellent! Excellent!"

27 Finest-of-Kauravas Yudhiṣṭhira,
sad at heart,
his eyes brimming with tears,
touched the feet
of Bhīṣma,
and said:

28 "Pitāmaha! Grandfather!
The sun has sucked
the earth dry of rasa-moisture,
and is about to set.
I will come again tomorrow
with my questions."

29 Keśava-Krishna,
Kṛpa and Yudhiṣṭhira
paid their respects
to the Brahmins,
helf-circled in *pradakṣiṇā*
Bhīṣma,
the son of the mahā-river Gaṅgā,
climbed into their chariots,
and left.

30 The true-vowed heroes
bathed in the waters
of the Dṛṣadvatī river,
intoned japa-mantras
and performed other auspicious
saṁdhyā-evening rituals.
Their evening worship over,
the foe-scorchers returned
to the Elephant City Hastināpura.

SECTION FIFTY-NINE

1 Rising early the next morning
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
the Yādavas and the Pāṇḍavas
finished their ablutions,
and rode out of the city
in town-tall chariots.

2 O blameless Janamejaya!
Reaching the spot
in Kurukṣetra where Bhīṣma lay,
the incomparable chariot-heroes
enquired
how he had passed the night.

3 They revered Vyāsa and the ṛṣis
and were blessed by them;
then all of them together
sat around Bhīṣma.

4 Mahā-radiant rājā Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira
offered
his pūjā-respects
to Bhīṣma,
joined his palms in *añjali*;
and said:

5 "O foe-punishing rājā!
Paraṁtapa Bharata!
What is the etymology
of the word 'rājā'?
This I would like to know.

6 The same arms, hands, neck,
the same *buddhi*-intellect,
senses and ātman,
subject to the same joys and sorrows,
the same back,
mouth, and stomach,

7 The same semen,
bones, marrow and flesh,
the same in-breathing
and out-breathing,
the same prāṇa life-breath,
the same body,

8 The same getting born,
the same dying,
the same all the other guṇas –
so what makes a king
excel others who are brave
and brilliant?

9 This world is full of brave
and ārya-noble individuals.
What makes a king
so special,
what makes him get the approval
of everyone else?

10 What makes the whole world pleased
 if he is pleased,
and what makes
 the whole world uneasy
if the king
 is uncomfortable?

11 What can be the reason,
 O bull-brave Bharata?
I want this fully clarified.
 O finest of eloquent speakers!
I want to get
 to the heart of this.

12 O lord of the world!
 The entire world
bowing humbly
 before one individual –
this cannot be dismissed
 as trivial."

13 "O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!"
 replied Bhīṣma.
"Listen carefully to how
 kingship had its origin
in the distant past
 of the Kṛta-Yuga.

14 To begin with,
 there was no kingship, no rājā,
no punishment,
 no punishment-giver.
The people followed dharma,
 and cherished each other.

15 O descendant of Bharata!
 With dharma they cherished each other,
cared for each other.
 Time passed;
and mutual caring proved burdensome,
 and misgiving crept in.

16 O bull-brave hero!
With misgiving setting in,
perception became confused,
and with that began
a deterioration
of their dharma.

17 O finest of the Bharatas!
With perception confused,
confusion led to delusion,
which led further
to greed taking hold
of mankind.

18 Which meant, *prabhu*-lord,
they yearned to have
what they did not have.
And that was when
they became victims
of kāma-lust.

19 Uncontrolled kāma, Yudhiṣṭhira,
let to rāga, fierce anger;
and anger led
to a blurring
of what should
and what should not be done.

20 O Indra-among-rājās!
Sexual promiscuity,
wild uncivilised speech,
gluttonous food habits,
and inability
to tell bad from good . . .

21 With human values declining,
came a decline
in Veda-values as well.
With Veda-values crumbling,
O rājā,
came the decline of dharma.

22 O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
Seeing Brahma-Veda and Dharma
getting destroyed,
the agitated gods
sought the protection
of Brahmā.

23 Seeking the grace of Bhagavān
Grandfather-of-the-cosmos Brahmā,
the gods
in dire distress,
stood before him
with palms joined in *añjali*.

24 'Bhagavan!' they said.
'We are afraid,
because greed, confusion and other vices
have gripped mankind
and are polluting the ideals
of Sanātana Brahma-Veda.

25 O Īśvara Lord! Tribhuvaneśvara!
O Lord of the three worlds!
With Brahma-Veda lost,
Dharma will be lost.
We immortals are now
like mortals.

26 Sacred libations streamed up
like rain to us,
and we responded by sending rain
down to mankind.
Now, with no rituals performed,
we are helpless.

27 Pitāmaha Brahmā!
Help us out
of this predicament.
Our very godhood,
empowered by you,
is in peril.'

28 Svayambhū Self-Born Brahmā
advised the gods:
'O bull-brave gods!
A way can be found.
Let me see how best
you can prosper.'

29 So, out of his *buddhi*,
Brahmā materialised a treatise
consisting of one lakh sections
dealing in detail
with dharma, artha and kāma –
the triple path –

30 The Tri-varga path,
the creation
of Svayambhū-Brahmā himself.
The fourth, mokṣa,
is different in nature and meaning
from these three.

31 The tri-varga three-ness
of mokṣa
lies in sattva, rajas, and tamas.
The three-ness of punishment
is protecting merchants, rewarding the good,
and destroying the wicked.

32 Keep in mind also Ṣaḍ-varga,
the six-fold path
of politics dealing with ātman,
place, time, means,
plans, and allies –
the path of national success.

33 O bull-brave Bharata!
Also in the treatise are:
trayī Vedic rites, *ānvīkṣikī*-knowledge,
vārtā-agriculture,
and a very large section *daṇḍanīti,*
law-and-punishment."

34 The behaviour of ministers, envoys, spies,
the conduct of princes,
how to deal with secret agents,
how to appoint envoys;

35 Conciliation, creating dissensions,
gift-giving, punishment,
calculated indifference – these five,
O ruler, are in the treatise.

36 All kinds of negotiations,
ways of fomenting disunity,
the perils of such fomenting,
as well as the fruits
of the success or failure
of negotiations.

37 Peace treaties are of three kinds –
bad, middling, and good.
Bad, signed through fear;
middling, which brings respect;
good, which brings wealth.
These are described in detail.

38 Also, the four justified aggressions:
to help one's friends, to augment the treasury,
to destroy an enemy's allies, to waste his treasury.
Also, the three kinds of victory:
victory won by the use of dharma,
victory won by the use of wealth,

39 Victory won by means used by antigods.
These are described in detail,
as well as the good, middling and bad
of these five:
ministers, kingdom, fortifications,
army, and treasury.

40 There are two kinds of punishing power –
overt and covert.
Overt punishing power
is of eight kinds;
covert punishing power
is also described in detail.

41 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Chariots, elephants,
horses, foot-soldiers, mercenaries,
manual labourers,
army guides, and fifth columnists –
these eight,

42 O Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira,
make up
the overt punishing power.
Snake-poison,
herb-poison, drugs and so on
are the covert,

43 Which work by smearing and touching,
and mixing in food.
Incantations are also effective.
Also described
in the treatise are allies,
enemies, and neutrals.

44 The guṇa-characteristics of roads,
the guṇas of the soil,
the guṇas of self-help,
of confidence,
of chariots and other vehicles
are also dealt with.

45 Planning and management
of men, elephants,
chariots, and horses;
battle-formations
of various kinds,
and war strategies –

46 Leaping and attacking, stooping
and escaping,
organising a successful retreat,
fighting fairly,
and, O bull-brave Bharata,
expertise in war-weapons . . .

47 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Military rescue
in crisis and emergency,
inspiring courage in soldiers,
testing the loyalty
of foot-soldiers,

48 Making plans for the security
of fortifications,
being always prepared for battle,
harassing the enemy
by encouraging the infiltration
of robbers and vandals,

49 Employing arsonists, poisoners
and professional cheats
to undermine the enemy,
and persuading the disaffected
to sow discord
in enemy ranks,

50 Spreading pollution and corruption,
undermining the ranks of elephants,
sowing terrorism,
and honouring lavishly
those in the enemy
who are well disposed toward you . . .

51 Employing inspectors to report
on the decline, progress
and stability of the kingdom,
taking all steps
to promote the kingdom's prosperity –
are described in detail.

52 Enemies, allies, and neutrals –
how to deal with them;
how to crush
a powerful enemy,
and how to see
that he remains crushed;

53 Precise details of administration,
plucking out thorns
in the running of the kingdom,
inaugurating projects,
encouraging wrestling
and wealth-accumulation;

54 Rehabilitating the down-and-out,
arranging the welfare
of common workers and servants,
giving timely charity,
discouraging attachment
to corrupt *vyasana*-habits;

55 The guṇa-characteristics of rājās,
the guṇa-characteristics
of army generals;
the nature, and the defects and virtues
of the three-fold way
of dharma, artha and kāma;

56 The various ways of wickedness,
the emoluments
appropriate for employees,
discreet suspiciousness against all,
avoidance of neglect
and carelessness;

57 Desiring to do the not-done,
improving upon
the already done,
distributing where needed most
the wealth that has already
been accumulated;

58 Secondly, the good use of wealth
for purposes of dharma;
thirdly, its misuse in the pursuit
of kāma-pleasures;
and fourthly, to alleviate distress –
are described in the treatise.

59 O finest of the Kauravas!
Also described
are the ten terrible vices,
the *vyasanas*
that are born from anger
and kāma-lust.

60 O bull-brave Bharata!
Hunting, gambling,
drinking, and womanising –
the four kāma-vices
condemned by ācāryas are described
in Self-Born Brahmā's treatise.

61 The vices of anger are six:
rude speech,
crude conduct, excessive punishment,
hurting oneself,
rejecting others,
and wasting money.

62 Described also are various gadgets
and mechanical contrivances –
how to make them
and how to use them
to confound an enemy,
and demolish his homes and mansions.

63 Destruction of *caitya*-buildings,
and shady trees,
surrounding roads of war-transport,
organising agriculture,
building essential infra-structure
and industries are also listed.

64 O finest of magnificent warriors!
Also, the characteristics
of *paṇava-anaka*-and-*bheri* drums and conches;
and how to acquire
the six-fold wealth:
gems, cattle, land, robes, maids, and gold.

65 Establishing law and order
in newly conquered lands,
pūjā-respecting the virtuous,
being friendly with the learned,
knowing how to perform
the morning homa-rituals,

66 How to touch auspicious objects,
how to dress
and adorn one's body,
the etiquette of cuisine,
and faith
in goodness and piety;

67 How to be self-dependent,
truth-speaking,
speaking pleassantly at festivals
and social gatherings,
acquaintance with the rules of flag-hoisting
at public buildings –

68 O tiger-brave Bharata,
What happens openly
or in secret,
wherever the common people meet –
how to be aware of it –
all this is explained.

69 Exempting Brahmins from punishment,
and punishing justly
all found guilty of crimes,
looking after
one's dependents and relatives
and the talented deserving,

70 Protection of all citizens,
making the kingdom prosperous –
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
All the serious thinking
about the twelve-fold rāja-maṇḍala
is described in the treatise.

71 All the seventy-two forms
of medical treatment,
the traditions and customs
of different countries,
tribes and families, their dharmas,
are also described.

72 O bestower of lavish *dakṣiṇās*!
Also in it is advice
on dharma, artha, kāma,
and mokṣa,
and on the yearning for wealth
and how to acquire it.

73 Also: The roots of the fruits
of economic prosperity,
the use and practice of māyā,
the purity of flowing water
and the pollution
of stagnant water

74 O tiger-brave rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
The idea
of this Nīti-Śāstra
is to prevent mankind
from straying from the path
of goodness.

75 After composing this auspicious śāstra,
Prabhu-Lord Bhagavān Brahmā
was pleased,
and he said
to the assembly of gods
headed by Śakra-Indra:

76 "This cream of the milk of knowledge
of the goddess of learning Śarasvatī
is meant
for the world's welfare
through the three-fold path
of dharma-artha-kāma.

77 The world will be protected
by the rules of punishment
expounded in it.
By restraining the wicked,
it will ensure
the welfare of all.

78 This will be known in the three worlds
as Daṇḍa-nīti,
the Principles of Punishment.
By the application
of these principles will the world
again progress.

79 It contains the essence
of the three guṇa-virtues
and the three aguṇa-defects.
Mahātmās will praise it.
Dharma-artha-kāma-mokṣa
are described in it."

80 The first to assimilate this treatise
was Bhagavān Śaṅkara-Śiva,
the Multi-formed
Bahurūpa, Śiva,
Sthāṇu, the Large-Eyed Viśālākṣa,
Umā's consort Umā-pati.

81 Seeing the human life-span diminishing,
Bhagavān Śiva,
the Large-Eyed Viśālākṣa
abridged this
mahā-potent śāstra
of Brahmā,

82 And, making it known to all
as Viśālākṣa,
he passed its ten thousand sections
to devotee-of-Brahmā
Subrahmanya-Indra
of mahā-tapasyā,

83 Bhagavān Puraṁdara-Indra,
destroyer-of-cities,
who further condensed it
to five thousand sections
which, *tāta*, dear Yudhiṣṭhira
are known as Bāhudantaka.

84 Yet another condensation of his
by *īśvara*-lord
rich-in-intellect Bṛhaspati
into three thousand sections
is known as
the Bārhaspatya.

85 It was abridged still further
by mahā-illustrious
exceedingly wise Yoga-ācarya
Kāvya-Śukra
into a compendium
of one thousand sections.

86 It was the decreasing life-span
of human beings
that made the mahā-ṛṣis,
for the welfare
of the worlds,
decide to abridge the śāstra.

87 And so it happened that the gods
decided to approach
Lord-of-creatures Prajāpati Viṣṇu.
They said to him:
"Name us one man
who is the finest of all."

88 *Prabhu*-Lord Bhagavān Deva Nārāyaṇa
reflected briefly.
Then, with the power
of divine energy,
he materialised a mind-born son
named Virajas.

89 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
Mahā-fortune-favoured Virajas
did not desire
worldly power and authority.
His *buddhi*-intellect preferred
a life of renunciation.

90 Virajas's son Kīrtimān also rose
above the five senses.
Kīrtimān's son was Kardama.
And Kardama
devoted himself to a life
of mahā-tapasyā.

91 Kardama's son was Anaṅga,
Prajāpati-Anaṅga.
He devoted himself
to the welfare of his subjects.
He was very pious,
and very learned in Daṇḍa-nīti.

92 The name of Anaṅga's son
was Atibala,
also very learned in punishment-principles,
and ruler of a mahā-kingdom,
but a slave
to his senses.

93 Now, Mṛtyu had a mind-born daughter
Sunītā,
celebrated in the three worlds.
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
By Atibala, she had a son
named Vena.

94 Rage-and-hate-obsessed Vena,
driven by deviation of *vidharma*,
began oppressing
his subjects.
Wise-in-Brahman ṛṣis slew him
with mantra-charged kuśa-grass weapons.

95 Intoning mantras, the ṛṣis proceeded
to dismember his right thigh.
From his thigh
there emerged
a crooked-limbed, misshapen,
dwarf-like creature.

96 Like a charred log he was;
he had red eyes
and black hair.
The wise-in-Brahman ṛṣi
saw him and said:
"*Niṣīda*! Sit down!"

97 He is the progenitor
of the cruel hill-and-forest tribes
known as the Niṣīdas,
and the hundreds
of thousands of Mlecchas
dwelling in the Vindhya mountains.

98 The mahā-ṛṣis next dismembered
the right arm of Vena.
From that right arm
three materialised a man
who resembled Indra
in every way.

99 He was clad in coat of mail,
he carried a sword
and a bow and arrows.
Well-versed in the Vedas and Vedānta,
he was also expert in Dhanurveda,
the art of warfare,

100 And in the Principles of Punishment,
the Daṇḍa-nīti.
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
The son of Vena stood before the mahā-ṛṣis
with plams joined in *añjali*,
and said:

101 "I have *buddhi*-insight
into the subtle nature
of dharma-and-artha.
Please advise me –
what shall I do
with this keen knowledge?

102 Whatever you advise me
to do,
that I shall do
to the best of my ability.
I will have no second thoughts
about this."

103 And so the assembly of gods
and the supreme ṛṣis
said to him: "Fearlessly
undertake any task
which promotes
the principles of dharma.

104 Look on all people equally.
Lay aside
like and dislike.
Keep kāma, anger,
greed and pride
at arm's length.

105 Keeping eternal dharma in mind,
use all the strength
of your arms
to punish any individual on earth
who violates
the dictates of dharma.

106 And promise yourself –
and keep your promise:
'In thought, word, and deed,
I will faithfully
uphold Brahma-Veda-principles
on earth.'

107 And promise yourself also:
'With all the power at my command,
I will uphold
the eternal dharma
through the application
of the Principles of Punishment.'

108 O radiant foe-chastiser!
Promise furthermore
that Brahmins will be exempted
from punishment,
and you will save the world
from caste-intermixture."

109 Vena's son replied
to the gods and the ṛṣis:
"O bull-brave ones!
Mahā-fortune-favoured Brahmins
will always receive
my namaskāra."

110 To which the wise-in-Brahman ṛṣis
said:
"*Evam-astu*! So be it!"
And so Śukra,
that vast treasure of Brahman-Wisdom,
became Vena's purohita.

111 The Vālakhilyas became his ministers;
so also
the Sārasvata mahā-ṛṣis.
The mahā-ṛṣi bhagavān Garga
became
his *sāṁvatsara*-astrologer.

112 According to śruti,
Pṛthu is eighth in descent from Viṣṇu:
Viṣṇu, Virajas, Kīrtimān, Kardama,
Anaṅga, Atibala, Vena, Pṛthu.
The panegyrists of Pṛthu
were Sūta and Māgadha.

113 Pleased with them, Vena's son,
valiant rājā Pṛthu
bestowed on Sūta
the sea-coast territory called Anūpa,
and on Māgadha he bestowed
the territory of Māgadha.

114 We have heard that in Pṛthu's time
the earth everywhere
was all uneven ups and downs.
It was Pṛthu
who made the earth's surface
level as it is now.

115 During every *manvantara*
of 4,320,000 years,
the earth's surface becomes uneven.
The rocky and hilly
ups and downs,
by Vena's son were piled,

116 O mahārāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
in heaps,
with his bow-end,
and became mountain ranges.
Bhagavān Viṣṇu, Śakra-Indra
and the gods,

117 The ṛṣis, Praja-pālas and Brahmins
assembled to anoint Pṛthu
as the world's sovereign.
O son of Pāṇḍu!
The Earth personified honoured him
with gifts of gems

118 The lord-of-rivers, the Ocean,
and Himavant
the supreme-among-unmoving-objects,
and Śakra-Indra
gave inexhaustible wealth to Pṛthu,
O Yudhiṣṭhira.

119 The golden mountain Maha-Meru
gave him gold.
The rājā of yakṣas and rākṣasas,
bhagavān Kubera,
who rides on the backs
of human beings,

120 Gave him wealth
sufficient to meet every need
of dharma, artha and kāma.
Horses, chariots,
elephants,
and crores of human beings,

121 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
served Vena's son
the instant he thought of them.
No aging,
no famine, no disasters,
no disease then;

122 Such was the protection
in that rājā's reign
that nobody feared any loss
or harm
from snakes and robbers
and neighbours.

123 When he travelled by sea,
the waves calmed
and made level passage for him.
Mountains made way for him,
no one ever challenged
the royal flag.

124

Like a farmer milking a cow,
he extracted
from the earth
seventeen kinds of food-crops
for the benefit of yakṣas,
rākṣasas and nāgas.

125

That mahātmā ensured
the sway of dharma
in the world.
Because he *raṁjita*-delighted
all his people,
he was called a rājā.

126

Because he protected Brahmins
from *kṣati*-harm,
he was called a Kṣatriya.
Because Pṛthu established
dharma on earth,
the earth is known as Pṛthivī.

127

O descendant of Bharata!
Eternal Viṣṇu himself
approved and endorsed his glory,
saying: "O rājā!
No one will ever surpass
your authority."

128

Pleased with his tapasyā,
Bhagavān Viṣṇu
entered his body.
Of all the world's kings,
Pṛthu is the one namaskāra-ed
as the man-god-king.

129

O lord-among-men Nareśvara!
You must always
protect your kingdom
through the Principles of Punishment,
and ensure through spies
that no one dares to attack it.

130 O Indra-among-rājās!
Your good karma
will lead to the good of your people.
The whole earth
respecting one person –
what reason can

131 There be for this
than the divine guṇa-qualities
of that individual?
At that time,
a golden lotus blossomed
from Viṣṇu's forehead,

132 And from that flower materialised
Śrī Devī,
the goddess of prosperity,
wise Dharma's wife.
Artha was born of Dharma and Śrī,
O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

133 And so the kingdom flourished,
because of these three:
Dharma, Artha, and Śrī.
After his good karma
is exhausted in heaven,
on earth is born

134 As a ruler he who knows
all the Principles of Punishment.
Tāta! Dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
Gifted
with the glorious greatness of Viṣṇu,
that man

135 Because of his *buddhi*-brilliance
becomes a mahātmā on earth.
And so it is,
that, because divine power
has established
his position,

136 Everyone obeys him,
and no one commands him.
O Indra-among-rājās!
Good karma promotes goodness.
So, though he be like other men,
the king is scrupulously obeyed.

137 To see a king's serene face,
is to be captivated
by his personality.
He is the fortune-favoured-one,
the affluent one,
the handsome one.

138 The glory of just punishment
is that
it makes possible
the rule of law and order,
which is at the root
of everything.

139 So, Yudhiṣṭhira, *āgama* sacred texts,
the Purāṇas,
the births of mahā-ṛṣis,
tīrtha-pilgrimages,
the planets and stars
and constellations,

140 The four *āśrama*-stages of life,
the four *hotṛs*,
the four castes,
the four kinds of knowledge –
are all described
in the treatise.

141 *Itīhāsa*-history, Vedas,
and Nyāya philosophy
are explained in detail.
Tapasyā, knowledge,
ahiṁsā, truth, untruth,
and what is beyond,

142 Service of the elderly,
charity, purity,
effort and enterprise,
compassion for all life –
all these are dealt with
in the treatise.

143 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
What else is left?
What is obvious in this world,
and what is hidden –
everything is found
in Brahmā Pitāmaha's śāstra.

144 O Indra-among-rājās!
O lord of the world!
From that time on,
the learned have said:
"Man-god-king and a god –
they are both the same."

145 O finest of the Bharatas!
I have explained
to you the entire glory
of a rājā.
What more is there
that you would like to know?

SECTION SIXTY

1 Once again revering Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and folding his palms in *añjali,*
Yudhiṣṭhira asked:

2 "What are the special dharmas
of the four castes,
and what are the four stages of life,
and what is rāja-dharma?

3 How does a kingdom prosper,
how does a rājā prosper?
O bull-brave Bharata!
How do citizens prosper,
and how do servants
and menials prosper?

4 And are there any things
a thing should stay away from?
Such as treasuries of any kind,
punishments, forts, allies,
ministers, *ṛtvik*-priests, purohitas,
and ācāryas?

5 Pitāmaha Bhīṣma!
What I would like to know
is who should a rājā trust
in danger and crisis,
and what should he
firmly guard against?"

6 I namaskāra mahā-Dharma!
(said Bhīṣma).
I namaskāra Vedha-Krishna the Creator!
I namaskāra all Brahmins here,
and I proceed with my discourse
on eternal Dharma.

7 Non-anger, truth-speaking,
wealth-sharing,
forbearance, procreating children
by one's own wife,
inner and outer purity,
non-hostility;

8 Simplicity, looking after the needs
of one's dependants –
these nine are the common dharma
of all four castes.
Let me now speak specifically
about Brahmin dharma.

9 First and last, they say,
self-restraint, mahārāja,
is a Brahmin's dharma.
Also, systematic study
of sacred texts.
These two fulfil their karma.

10 Should a Brahmin,
diligently and serenely
involved in his karma,
come across wealth
without resorting
to any improper means –

11 Then let him marry
and have children,
or give it away in charity
or in yajñas.
Good people say :
Wealth shared is best enjoyed.

12 Whatever else he does,
or does not do,
a Brahmin's fulfilment lies
in studying sacred texts.
He who is friendly to all
is a Brahmin.

13 O Bharata descendant!
Let me explain
now a Kṣatriya's dharma.
A Kṣatriya gives, never begs;
performs his own yajñas,
not those of others.

14 He studies; he does not teach.
He is dedicated
to the protection of his people.
He kills robbers
and *dasyu*-renegades.
He is valiant in battle.

15 There have been many remarkable
ritual-performing
and learned-in-*śruti* earth-lords
who, victorious in battle,
have also won
the realm of heaven.

16 Those who know our heritage
do not praise
any Kṣatriya whose karma
exposes him as one
who returned from battle
without a scratch on his body.

17 Killing, they say, is the supreme road
travelled
by a Kṣatriya.
No higher mission for him
than snuffing out
robbers and renegades.

18 Charity and study and yajñas
are fine for a rājā,
but the deepest desire for dharma
in a rājā
is connected with his readiness
for battle.

19 Let an earth-ruler arrange
so that his subjects
are able to abide
by their sva-dharmas,
and the performance of dharma
proceeds smoothly and serenely.

20 Whatever else he does,
or does not do,
a king must protect his people.
Then he becomes like Indra,
and the title
he gets is "Aindra."

[XII:60:21-26]

Transcreated by P. Lal

21 I come now to the eternal dharma
of a Vaiśya.
Charity, study,
and yajñas,
and making money
by fair means.

22 A Vaiśya cares for animals
with the lovingkindness
of a father for his children.
It is wrong for him
to do anything
other than this.

23 This kind of caring for animals
bring mahā-happiness to a Vaiśya.
Prajāpati Brahmā
created animals,
but entrusted their care
to Vaiśyas.

24 The care and protection of people
he left in the hands
of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas.
A Vaiśya works in this way:

25 If he cares for six cows,
he gets the milk of one cow;
for a hundred, he gets a bull
and a cow;
if he sells the milk,
he gets a seventh of the proceeds;
the horns, also one-seventh;
the hooves, one-sixteenth.

26 If he cultivates land with seeds
from others, he gets a seventh –
annually, that is.
Never should a Vaiśya
have to say:
"I will not care for cattle."

27 So long as a Vaiśya is ready
to care for cattle,
no other person should be hired.
O Bharata descendant!
Let me now deal
with a Śūdra's dharma.

28 Prajāpati Brahmā created Śūdras
to serve others.
So it is ordained
that a Śūdra
serves the three
other castes.

29 His mahā-happiness
comes from his attending
to their needs.
In other words,
a Śūdra is always ready
for such service.

30 A Śūdra should never go about
amassing wealth,
for wealth brings out the evil
in him,
and makes him treat his superiors
as inferiors.

31 With the rājā's permission, however,
a Śūdra can perform any deed
ordained by dharma.
Let me explain
how a Śūdra goes about
earning his livelihood.

32 It is said that the three castes
are responsible
for the maintenance of Śūdras.
Umbrellas, head-wear,
beds and seats, wooden shoes
and hand-fans –

33 Worn-out and rejected ones –
should be provided
to Śūdras.
Frayed and discarded dresses,
barely wearable,
should be given by Brahmins

34 To Śūdras, because dharma says
they are meant
for use by Śūdras.
Should a Śūdra desire
to serve
any of the twice-born castes,

35 He should be provided
proper employment.
So say those who know dharma.
A son-less master merits
a Śūdra-servant's *piṇḍa*-offering.
An old and frail master

36 Must be cared for faithfully
by a Śūdra.
If a master becomes poor,
a Śūdra must care for him
with whatever little
the Śūdra has.

37 The entire wealth of a Śūdra
belongs to his master.
Yajñas are performed by the three castes
and by Śūdras,
but Śūdras are forbidden to chant the Svāhā,
Vaṣaṭ and other mantras.

38 A Śūdra can perform minor yajñas
like the Pāka-yajñas,
where the
pūrṇa-pātra dakṣiṇā consists in offering
two hundred fistfuls of corn
as gift-giving.

39 We have heard that in the past
a Śūdra named Parjavana
offered a hundred thousand *pūrṇa-pātras*
in an Aindrāgni-yajña
instead of the hundred thousand animals
ordained for that yajña.

40 O descendant of Bharata!
Yajñas are obligatory
for Śūdras,
as for the other three castes.
Essential for all yajñas
is śraddhā-devotion.

41 The mahā-divinity is śraddhā.
Śraddhā-devotion
is what purifies the yajña-performer.
And Brahmins too
are the supreme divinties.
Each is uniquely divine.

42 Each performs yajñas,
and each seeks and obtains
the gratification of desire.
It's from Brahmins
that the three other castes
have originated!

43 What the gods of the gods,
the Brahmins, say,
must be for universal welfare,
which is why they,
and not non-Brahmins,
should officiate at yajñas.

44 Deserving of pūjā-respect is the Brahmin
learned in Ṛg-Yajuḥ-Sāma Vedas.
The Śūdra-menial, ignorant of Ṛg-Yajuḥ-Sāma,
is still a Prajāpati-devotee.
Tāta! Dear Bharata! What purifies
all the four castes is mind-yajña.

[XII:60:45-50]

Transcreated by P. Lal

45 Mind-yajña is śraddhā-yajña.
It is the privilege
of all the four castes.
Gods cannot refuse it, nor men reject it.

46 Brahmins being god-like in this respect,
they cannot refuse
to perform yajñas
for the other castes.
Useless is the Vitāna-yajña
even if well performed
by a Vaiśya mantra-chanter.

47 Since all the three other castes
have sprung from Brahmins,
there is a blood-bond
between all the castes.
Originally, Sāma-Yajur-Ṛg were one;
and from Brahmin alone
originated the three other castes.

48 O Indra-among-rājās!
In this connection,
there is a song in praise of yajñas munis
sung by the Vaikhānasa
in the distant past
during a yajña-performance.

49 "Before the sun rises,
And after the sun rises,
Mahā-śraddhā inspires
Self-restrained worshippers
To proceed with dharma
To the yajña-fires."

50 There is the *skanna-homa,*
the first oblation,
and the non-spilling *askanna,*
the final oblation.
Countless yajñas,
and countless their karma-fruits.

51 Only the Brahmin with śraddhā,
with deep knowledge
of the varieties of rituals
and their significance,
has the right to officiate
at yajña-ceremonies.

52 Let a person be a thief,
a criminal,
the worst of criminals –
people will see
the good in him
if he performs a yajña.

53 Even the ṛṣis will praise him –
no doubt of that –
and see the good in him.
The conclusion is:
All the four castes
should freely perform yajñas.

54 Nothing in the three worlds
equals yajña-sacrifice.
With a mind free from envy,
every person
with all his śakti
and with all his śraddhā,
should involve himself
in the performance of yajña.

SECTION SIXTY-ONE

1 Bhīṣma continued:
Truly valiant
mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
Listen now to the details
of what are known
as the four āśramas,
the four stages of life
of a human being.

2 *Vānaprastha*: living in a forest;
bhaikṣacarya: living as a mendiciant;
mahā-important *gārhasthya*: householder;
brahmacarya: self-disciplined student.
The fourth, final stage is the one
meant specially for Brahmins.

3 After passing through the saṁskāra-rituals
of matted hair,
the sacred thread ceremony,
the *ādhāna* sacred fire and others,
and studying deeply
the wisdom of the Vedas,

4 He should retire with his wife,
or alone,
with purified ātman
and disciplined senses,
to the forest, after fulfilling
his householder's duties.

5 So the one who is wise in dharma,
immersed in the Āraṇyaka śāstras
of forest-wisdom,
sublimating his sexual energy,
renouncing the world, becomes one
with the Imperishable Ātman.

6 These examples set, O rājā,
by sex-sublimating munis
should be the ideals
for Brahmins to cherish
and put in practice
as obligatory duty.

7 O lord of the world Yudhiṣṭhira!
Once a Brahmin
successfully practises brahmacarya,
he gains the right
to experience mokṣa
by living as a *bhaikṣacarya*-mendicant.

8 Sleeping content wherever evening falls,
not wishing any better,
a homeless wanderer,
subsisting on whatever is available,
disciplining his senses
and controlling his longings,

9 Curbing his hopes as well,
equal-minded to all,
shunning pleasures that excite,
immune to irritations, –
such a superior Brahmin becomes one
with the Imperishable Ātman.

10 The householder's dharma
requires study of the Vedas,
respecting rituals, begetting children,
enjoying life's pleasures.
Difficult to practise is householder-dharma;
even muni-dharma praises it.

11 Having intercourse with his wife
only during her *ṛtu-kāla* fertile period,
serving traditional values,
eschewing deceit and cunning,
moderate in eating, honouring the gods,
grateful, truthful, soft-spoken,
never wishing harm to anyone,
patient and forbearing;

12 The *gṛha-āśramī* householder
must also be
self-restrained,
respectful to wise elders,
gratifying gods and *pitṛs*,
offering food to Brahmins,
free from pride,
hospitable to all sects,
and unfailingly involved
in the performance
of *vitāna* sacred fire ceremonies.

[XII:61:13-17]

Transcreated by P. Lal

13 *Tāta!* Dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
In this connection,
is a mahā-meaningful song,
the Song of Nārāyaṇa,
sung by mahā-ṛṣis
of mahā-experience
and after deep tapasyā.
Listen to me
as I repeat it:

14 "Regarding a householder's mortality,
This is my belief:
Truth and simplicity,
Pūjā-respect of guests,
Dharma-artha probity,
Pursuit of happiness,
Marital fidelity,
Are the means to gain
Heavenly felicity."

15 The supreme ṛṣis have declared
the householder stage as the finest,
and it involves study of the Vedas,
and support of sons and wives.

16 A Brahmin who assiduously
fulfils the duties
of the *gārhasthya* stage of life,
performing with ease
the appropriate yajna-rituals,
will find, after their completion,
waiting for him,
their fruits in heaven.

17 When he gives up his body,
he obtains fulfilment
of all his desires,
as if hosts of eyes, heads and mouths
are waiting to serve him
in every way.

18 Yudhiṣṭhira! Studying the scriptures
alone, by himself,
alone, intoning the *japa*-chants,
serving his ācārya faithfully
with his dust-and-mud-smeared
body,

19 The brahmacārī, strict-vowed,
senses fully controlled,
immersed in study of the Vedas,
should receive *dīkṣā*-initation
in the home
of his ācārya.

20 Eternally at the service of,
and praṇāma-ing his guru,
dissociating himself from these six
(yajñas, yajña-practices, learning, teaching,
gift-giving, gift-taking),
and strive for detachment from the world.

21 He must never display
any kind of authority,
never show distaste even for an enemy.
Tāta! Dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
This is the āśrama-stage
of a true brahmacārī.

SECTION SIXTY-TWO

1 "Advise us now on such dharmas,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"which are auspicious, joy-giving,
good for the future,
ahiṁsā-inspired, approved by all,
and practical for us."

2 O incomparable Bharata! (replied Bhīṣma)
Only Brahmins are required to follow
all the four stages of live. *Prabhu*-lord!
The other three castes are not so required.

3 Recommended for Kṣatriyas
who desire heaven
are many merciless deeds, O rājā,
which become them,
but do not apply to your question
regarding Brahmins.

4 The Brahmin who does deeds
recommended
for Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras
is a fool:
he gets ill fame in this world,
and hell in the next.

5 Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
The same names
that brand slaves, dogs, wolves
and other beasts
are also applied to Brahmins
who violate their karma.

6 Who abstains from the six deeds
already referred to,
who follows the four stages of life,
who fulfils
what all the dharmas approve,
whose ātman is stable,

7 Who has inner and outer purity,
who is dedicated to *taparjā*,
who desires nothing,
who is generous –
that Brahmin is the one who attains
the imperishable realm.

8 Time, place, means, and motive
are what determine human karma.
And karma
thus performed
brings with its results appropriate
to its nature.

9 O Indra-among-rājās!
As mahā-important
to a Brahmin
is study of the Vedas
as agriculture to Vaiśyas
and royal power to Kṣatriyas.

10 Driven by Cosmic Time Kāla,
inexorable Kāla,
human beings are trapped
in karma –
excellent karma, indifferent karma,
and wicked karma.

11 Past karma – excellent or wicked –
determines the quality
of one's present life.
Śva-karma, one's own karma,
in this world leads to the everywhere-facing,
imperishable hereafter.

SECTION SIXTY-THREE

1 Stringing a bow
(continued Bhīṣma),
annihilating enemies,
agriculture, trade,
serving others for wealth –
are activities strictly undesirable
for a Brahmin.

2 A learned Brahmin,
as a householder,
should study the Vedas,
and perform the six prescribed duties,
and then retire to the forest.

3 He must avoid serving a rājā,
profiting from agriculture, trade and commerce,
crooked dealings, *kanalaṭeya*-adultery,
and the taking of usury,

4 Equivalent to a Śūdra,
O rājā,
is a pseudo-Brahmin
who is ill-charactered,
who has fallen from dharma,
who keeps a Śūdra girl
as his mistress,
who mixes with cheats,
dancers, and rājā's officers.

5 Let him do *japa*,
and chant from the Vedas
as much as he likes, O rājā –
he is a Śūdra,
not a Brahmin.
Treat him like a slave,
and feed him outside the house.
Do not, O rājā,
allow him to perform rituals
before the gods.

6 There is no merit ever gained,
O rājā,
if any gifts of food
sanctified as offerings
to the gods and *pitṛ*-ancestors
are given
to a Brahmin who is impure,
cruel, *hiṁsā*-inclined,
and fallen from dharma.

7 Which is why, O rājā,
O Brahmin's dharma ordains
that he be devoted
to self-restraint,
inner and outer purity,
and simplicity.
Being the first to be created,
a Brahmin, O rājā,
is given the privilege of following
all the four stages of life.

8 The true Brahmin is the person
who is self-controlled,
who drinks the soma-juice,
who is noble-minded,
compassionate, all-enduring,
not hoping for anything,
simple, gentle, never hostile,
full of fortitude.
Any other Brahmin is a rascal.

9 O Pāṇḍava rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
All who desire
to be dedicated to dharma
seek the support
of Śūdras, Vaiśyas, and sons
of Kṣatriya rājās.
If these castes cannot ensure
śānti-dharma,
Viṣṇu also refrains from blessing
these deniers of dharma.

10 And if that happens,
the happiness of the people
of this world,
the progress and welfare
of the four castes,
the yajñas and other rituals,
the ideals of the four stages of life –
will be ruined.

11 Listen now, Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
to what a Kṣatriya
should know about the dharmas
of the four stages if he wishes
that Brahmins, Vaiśyas and Śūdras
should follow them properly.

12 O ruler of the earth!
A Śūdra who has performed faithful service,
and fathered a son,
can obtain the permission of a rājā –

13 Provided there is not much difference
in purity between him
and members of the other castes – to follow
the three stages of life, but not the last,
provided also that he has abided
by the ten-dharma code.

14 O Indra-among-rājās!
A Śūdra who follows
such a dharma, or a Vaiśya,
with a rājā's permission,
can take up the forest-stage
appropriate for a king.

15 After he has assiduously completed
the duties of his caste,
an elderly Vaiśya,
with a rājā's permission,
can take up the forest-stage
appropriate for a king

16 O defectless Yudhiṣṭhira!
Diligently studying
the Vedas and Rāja-śāstras,
fathering a son,
performing rituals,
and drinking the soma-juice;

17 Also, O finest-of-all-eloquent-speakers
Yudhiṣṭhira,
ruling his subjects
under the guidance of dharma,
organising the Rājasūya, Aśvamedha
and other great sacrifices;

18 Amassing wealth
from a variety of sources,
and distributing it judiciously
among Brahmins;
winning small or major victories
in battle;

19 And also, O bull-brave Kṣatriya
Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira,
installing his own son on the throne,
or, if son-less,
another Kṣatriya's son
of a different *gotra*-lineage;

20 Revering his *pitṛs*
with proper *pitṛ*-offerings,
worshipping the gods with
appropriate yajñas
and honouring ṛṣis
with suitable respect –

21 Only after doing all this
should a Kṣatriya
desire to enter another
of the stages of life.
In this way will he attain
the final fulfilment.

22 O Indra-among-rājās!
After abandoning the stage
of the householder
for that of a mendicant,
a rāja-ṛṣi should do this not for pleasure,
but for plain subsistence.

23 O lavish *dakṣiṇā*-giver!
Mendicancy is not compulsory for Kṣatriyas,
Vaiśyas and Śūdras. Any caste is free
to choose it, O tiger-brave rājā.

24 The dharma of a rājā depends
on power and authority.
The major and minor dharmas
of the three other castes
depend upon Kṣatriya-dharma.
I have heard
that this is what is ordained
in the Vedas.

25 O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira!
The footprints
of an elephant can contain
the footprints
of all other animals.
The dharma
of a rājā embraces
and contains
all other dharmas.

26 Those who know dharma
say that the other dharmas
are insignificant in comparison,
and produce
precious little fruit.
According to them,
nothing equals Kṣatriya dharma:
it offers mahā-protection,
and its fruits
are wonderful well-being and welfare.

27 Of all dharmas, therefore,
rāja-dharma is the best,
for the simple reason
that it ensures the protection
of all other dharmas.
O rājā! In rāja-dharma
are all kinds of renunciation,
and renunciation is the highest
and most ancient of all dharmas.

28 If the Principles of Punishment,
the Daṇḍa-nīti is abandoned,
the world will fall
in the nether-world,
all the dharmas will perish.
The ancient rāja-dharma
is Kṣatriya-dharma.
If this dharma is not practised,
the dharmas of the four stages
of human life are doomed.

29 In rāja-dharma you can see
all kinds of renunciation,
in rāja-dharma you can see
all kinds of *dīkṣā*-initiation,
in rāja-dharma you can see
learning and meditation,
in rāja-dharma you can see
all kinds of worldly application.

30 Birds and beasts,
killed by barbarous hunters,
are the means by which
the dharma of the killers
declines and becomes tainted.
Similarly, other dharmas decline
when not protected by rāja-dharma,
and when the sva-dharma
of each caste declines,
all dharma suffers irreparably.

SECTION SIXTY-FOUR

1 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira! (said Bhīṣma)
Kṣatriya-dharma, common dharma,
Vedic dharma, the four āśramas' dharmas,
and the dharma of renouncing *yati*-ascetics –

2 O incomparable Bharata!
They all depend on Kṣatriya-dharma;
without it, all the creatures of the world
will have nothing to look forward to.

3 The dharmas of the four āśramas
have many doors,
which are not clearly seen.
To see them clearly,
learned people take the help
of the eternal sacred texts.

4 Many get misled by sweet-speaking
ignorant expounders
and their dharma gets muddled
in the process;
the lose their way,
and face a faithless future.

5 The dharma of a Kṣatriya
should be clear,
joy-giving, ātman-believing,
free of deceit,
and dedicated
to the welfare of mankind.

6 I have already explained, Yudhiṣṭhira,
that the three castes
depend on Kṣatriya-dharma. Similarly,
brahmacārī, *vānaprastha*
and *yati* Brahmins depend
on the householder's dharma.

7 Whatever is good and noble
in this world
needs the support of Rāja-dharma.
O Indra-among-rājās!
This I have already indicated.
Mahā-radiant Viṣṇu,

8 The Lord God of all created life,
Prabhu Nārāyaṇa –
in the faraway distant past,
many heroic rājās
went to him to learn all about
the Principles of Punishment.

9 They had carefully examined,
one by one,
the different karmas connected
with each āśrama-stage,
and they waited for clarification
from Viṣṇu.

10 In fact, all the gods –
the Sādhyas,
the Vasus, the Aśvins,
the Rudras,
the Viśvas, the Maruts, –
and the Siddhas,
created by the Ādi Divinity,
all depend on Kṣatriya-dharma.

11 Let me tell you a tale involving dharma-and-artha.
Long long ago,
this world was floundering in an ocean
of confusion created by the Dānavas.

12 At that time, O Indra-among-rājās,
the ruling rājā
was Māndhātā,
a truly valiant earth-protector.
He performed a colossal yajña,
eager for a darshan

13 Of Prabhu Lord God Nārāyaṇa,
the Divinity
without beginning, middle and end.
O tiger-brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
The Supreme Deity Parameśvaraṁ,
by rājā Māndhāta,

14 Was propitiated yajña;
he touched the feet
of mahātmā Viṣṇu with his head.
And Viṣṇu graced him
with a darshan
by appearing as Vāsava-Indra.

15
Surrounded by many earth-lords,
Māndhāta adored
Prabhu-lord Viṣṇu.
What transpired next
was this mahā-exchange
between the lion-brave
earth-lord Māndhāta
and mahātmā Indra
regarding mahā-radiant Viṣṇu.

16
"O finest of dharma-knowers,"
said Indra,
"what makes you yearn
so passionately
for a darshan
of the Ancient Primeval Divinity,
whose energy is limitless,
whose manifestations of māyā
are manifold,
wondrously virile Nārāyaṇa?

17
It is not given to me to see,
O rājā,
that Universe-Formed Divinity,
not even
to Brahmā himself.
If you cherish
any other desire in your heart,
I will grant it,
for you are a rājā among men.

18
You are rooted in truth,
you are devoted to dharma,
you have conquered
your senses,
you are valiant,
you have love for the gods.
I grant you this boon,
because the quality
of your *buddhi*, bhakti and śraddhā
has impressed me."

19 “I touch your feet with my head,
bhagavan, revered one,”
replied Māndhāta.
“All I ask is a darshan
of the Primeval Divinity,
the Ādi-Deva.
I discard kāma, I desire dharma.
I seek the path of goodness,
which all cherish.

20 I have practised
the illimitably vast dharma
of a Kṣatriya,
and my fame has spread
far and wide, everywhere.
But the dharma
that emanates from the Ādi-Deva,
the finest of all
the world’s dharmas –
I want to know that dharma.”

21 “No matter how dharma-devoted,”
replied Indra,
“a king without an army
cannot guide his subjects
towards dharma.
The first dharma
to emanate from the Ādi-Deva
was Kṣatriya-dharma.
The other dharmas came later.

22 Supreme among dharmas
is the dharma
of a Kṣatriya.
The other dharmas
are innumerable,
and countless are their fruits.
Because Kṣatriya-dharma
is what they all depend on,
it is said to be
the finest of all dharmas.

23 In the distant past,
it was Viṣṇu himself
who, with the help
of Kṣatriya-dharma,
routed all enemies.
After routing them,
he was able
to protect the gods
and the supremely radiant ṛṣis.

24 If the immeasureable Divinity
Bhagavan Viṣṇu
had not routed
all the antigods,
that would have put an end
to all Brahmins,
to the Primal Creator Brahmā,
put an end to dharma,
and an end also
to Ādi-Dharma.

25 If the finest of gods,
Ādi-Deva Viṣṇu
had not routed the antigods
with his strength and valour,
not only
would the Brahmins
have vanished,
but with them the four castes
and the dharmas of the four āśramas.

26 All these constant dharmas
have constantly perished,
hundreds of times,
and Kṣatriya-dharma
has revived them again.
So, in yuga after yuga,
the Ādi-Dharma survives,
because of Kṣatriya-dharma,
which is why Kṣatriya-dharma
is extolled as the finest.

27 The sacrifice of his life,
compassion
shown to all creatures,
knowledge of the world's ways,
protection and rescue of people,
relieving
the misery of the distressed –
this Kṣatriya-dharma
is practised by rulers of the earth.

28 Malicious destroyers of tradition,
driven by kāma
and self-importance,
are kept in check
by their fear of the rājā.
And those
who cherish dharma
in all its forms
can serve dharma well
because Kṣatriya-dharma protects them.

29 There is no doubt at all
that the world progresses
because earth-rulers like fathers
protect their subjects with Rāja-dharma.

30 Kṣatriya-dharma is of all dharmas the finest.
It is eternal, it is stable.
Incomparable, itself undying,
it leads to deathlessness."

SECTION SIXTY-FIVE

1 "Kṣatriya-dharma,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"is the finest of all dharmas
because it embraces all dharmas.
Kings like you should always follow
Kṣatriya-dharma,
otherwise the welfare of people
will become impossible.

2 A rājā should be compassionate
to all creatures,
and encourage the following:
cultivation of land,
performance of rites and rituals;
he should never
have to ask for anything,
because a rājā's dharma
is to provide and protect.

3 According to munis,
giving up is the supreme act.
The supremest giving up
is the sacrifice
of one's body in battle.
You have seen
for yourself
how the great rulers of the earth,
following Kṣatriya-dharma,
have always done this.

4 A Kṣatriya yearning for dharma
is free to take up
the brahmacarya-stage of life.
In that case,
he must diligently study
many śruti-scriptures,
he must assiduously
serve his guru.
The learned are agreed on this.

5 In everyday cases of governance,
a rājā must not allow himself
to be swayed
by like or dislike.
For maintaining the stability
of the four castes,
for the protection and security
of people,
for plans, projects and efforts
related to this,

6 For concerted activities
meant to promote
the welfare of the four āśramas,
Kṣatriya-dharma
is said to be
the finest of all dharmas.
It leads,
and the other dharmas follow.
Without it, disorder takes over.

7 No better than beasts are men
who devote themselves
solely to the pursuit
of material gain.
These flouters of tradition
need to be restrained.
Kṣatriya-dharma
encourages material progress
but within limits.
It is the best āśrama-dharma.

8 A Brahmin's dharma
consists of strict adherence
to the three Vedas
and to the four āśrama-stages
approved for a Brahmin.
A Brahmin who strays from this
deserves, like a Śūdra,
to be executed with sharp weapons.

9 O earth-ruler!
A Brahmin must observe Veda-dharma
and the dharma
of the four āśrama-stages.
A non-Brahmin can never aspire
to know these.

10 A Brahmin behaving otherwise
is no Brahmin.
Karma makes dharma.
A man is what his dharma is.

11 Let no one honour a Brahmin
whose karma
is not what his karma should be.
Let no one trust him.

12 Kṣatriya-dharma should ensure
maximum support
to all the dharmas
that promote the welfare
of the four castes.
Other dharmas cannot do this.
Kṣatriya-dharma's glory
lies in its excellent heroes."

13 Māndhātā asked: "The Yavanas,
Kirātas, Gāndāras,
Cīnas, Śabaras, Barbaras,
Śakas, Tuṣāras,
Kaṅkas, Pahlavas,
Āndhras, Madrakas,

14 Pāṇḍavas, Pulindas,
Ramaṭhas, all the Kāmbojas,
some mixed progeny
of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas,
some Vaiśyas
and Śūdras –

15 All of whom are my subjects
in my kingdom –
what kind of dharma
must I make them follow?
Many of them make a living
by robbing and stealing.

16 Sureśvara! O lord of the gods!
Bhagavan! Revered one!
This I want to know.
Please advise me.
I ask this, because you
are the friend of Kṣatriyas."

17 "The *dasyu*-robbers," replied Indra,
"let them serve
their fathers and mothers,
their ācāryas and gurus,
and whoever live
in their ashrams.

18 The *dasyu*-robbers have a duty also
to serve
the ruler of the kingdom.
They are also required
to observe the rites and rituals
of Veda-dharma.

19 They should also perform yajñas
for *pitṛ*-ancestors,
get wells dug,
provide water for thirsty travellers,
construct resting-places,
and give gifts to Brahmins.

20 Also required of them are:
ahiṁsā, truth,
absence of danger,
looking after ancestral property,
support of wives and children,
and inner and outer purity.

21 Any *dasyu* desiring his prosperity
should perform yajñas
and give away generous *dakṣiṇās*.
All *dasyus* are expected to perform
the mahā-expensive,
lavish-gifted Pāka-yajña.

22 O ruler without blemish!
These were the duties
ordained for the welfare of all,
from long ago,
and *dasyu*-robbers are also expected
to follow them."

23 “In the world of human beings,”
said Māndhātā,
“we see many examples
of *dasyu*-robbers living disguised
in the four castes
and the āśrama-stages.”

24 “O blameless one!” replied Indra.
“Rāja-dharma declines
when the Principles of Punishment
are not applied,
and subjects get confused
and bewildered.

25 When this Kṛta-yuga ends,
countless *bhikṣus*
professing a variety of creeds
will go about,
and people will get confused
about the āśrama-stages.

26 They will not listen
to the supreme ancient dharma
that posits idealistic goals.
Blinded by kāma
and self-importance,
they will pursue crooked ways.

27 When mahātmā rulers
restrain vice and wickedness
with the Principles of Punishment
defined in Daṇḍa-nīti,
then only is the Eternal Dharma
firmly established.

28 When human beings start insulting
a rājā
who is the guru of all the worlds,
gifts, libations
and *śrāddha*-offerings
become fruitless.

29

A rājā is one who espouses dharma,
he is the lord of men,
the eternal representative
of Divinity.
Even the gods do not flout
his authority.

30

When Bhagavān Prajāpati Brahmā
created the universe,
he intended the Kṣatriyas
to rule by dharma
and decide what leads to progress
and what to regress.

31

My admiration and pūjā-respect
go to the person
who uses his *buddhi*-intelligence
to discriminate
between what is dharma and what is not.
He is the true Kṣatriya."

32

Saying this (continued Bhīṣma),
Prabhu-Lord Bhagavān Viṣṇu,
disguised as Indra,
surrounded by hosts of Maruts,
returned to his eternal,
imperishable realm.

33

O blameless ruler Yudhiṣṭhira!
This was the way
dharma was ideally established
in the distant past.
Why should any wise and perceptive man
reject Kṣatriya-dharma?

34

Like blind men who do not know
where they are going,
are those in this world
who cannot make out
what leads to *pravṛtti*-progress
and *nivṛtti*-regress.

35 O tiger-among-men!
Blameless Yudhiṣṭhira!
Stay on this path of progress
of the ancient past.
I am convinced
you are the ideal person for this.

SECTION SIXTY-SIX

1 "You have discoursed to me,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"on the four āśrama-stages
of human life.
I would like to know more,
and in detail."

2 O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira! (said Bhīṣma)
You know what the good people
of this world know about all the dharmas.
I know as much as you do.

3 O finest of dharma-knowers!
O lord of men!
Nonetheless, since you ask,
I will tell you
in greater detail the characteristics
of such dharma.

4 O bull-brave hero!
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The merits that accrue to people
who practise the four āśrama-stages
are also obtained
by noble kings.

5 A king who implements,
without kāma and hate,
the Principles of Punishment
of Daṇḍa-nīti
attains the supreme goal
of the Bhaikṣya-āśrama ascetics.

6 The king who is learned,
who knows when to be lenient,
when to reward and punish,
who follows the tradition, and is patient,
gets the merits
of the householder's āśrama.

7 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
The king who pūjā-respects
the pūjā-deserving
and gifts them handsomely,
gets the merits
of the Bhaikṣya ascetics.

8 The king who becomes the saviour
of his *jāti*-caste,
his relatives and his friends
in times of crisis
attains the merits
of the *dīkṣā*-vānaprastha-āśrama stage.

9 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The king who honours
great men and great ascetics
of the Śaivite liṅga sect
gets the merits of the followers
of the vānaprastha āśrama.

10 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
The king who performs
pitṛ-yajñas, *bhūta*-yajñas
and human yajñas
gets the merits of the followers
of the vānaprastha āśrama.

11 O Indra-among-rājās!
The king who apportions
to subjects their proper share,
performs deva-yajñas,
and respect guests, gets the merits
of the vānaprastha āśrama.

12 O truly valiant Yudhiṣṭhira!
O tiger-among-men!
The king who annihilates enemies
for the protection of his subjects
gets the merits
of the vānaprastha āśrama.

13 O rājā! A king who ensures
the protection and progress of his people
gets the merits
of countless *dīkṣā*-initiations of yajñas,
and also the merits
of *satya*-saṁnyāsa āśrama.

14 Who studies the Vedas daily,
and is forebearing,
offers pūjā-respect to ācāryas,
and diligently serves his teachers,
gets the merits
of the brahma-saṁnyāsa-āśrama.

15 O tiger-among-men!
Who daily intones
the japa-mantra,
and offers pūjā always to the gods,
by this dharma gets the merits
of the dharma-excelling gārhasthya.

16 The rājā who goes to battle
gambling with life,
determined to save his kingdom
or die in the attempt,
gets the merits
of the brahma-saṁnyāsa āśrama-stage.

17 O descendant of Bharata!
The king who always
deals with every human being
without deviousness
gets the merits
of the brahma-saṁnyāsa āśrama-stage.

18 O descendant of Bharata!
The king who gives lavishly
to vānaprastha-followers,
Brahmins, and the learned in the three Vedas,
gets the merits
of the vānaprastha-āśrama.

19 O descendant of Bharata!
The king who shows
compassion for all,
and is never needlessly cruel,
gets the merits
of all the four āśrama-stages of life.

20 Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira!
The king who shelters
and is lovingkind to children
and the elderly
also gets the merits
of all the four āśrama-stages of life.

21 O Kaurava descendant!
Who gives asylum
to the exploited and persecuted
who seek his help
gets the merits
of the gārhasthya-householder-stage.

22 Who protects all animate
and inanimate life
and offers to it the pūjā-respect
it deserves
gets the merits
of the gārhasthya-householder stage.

23 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Rewarding and punishing
young and old wives and brothers,
and sons and grandsons,
is a raja's tapasyā bringing the merits
of the gārhasthya-stage.

24 O tiger-among-men!
Protecting and revering those
who are pūjā-worthy
and are wise in ātman-knowledge
gets a rājā all the merits
of the gārhasthya-āśrama.

25 O descendant of Bharata!
Inviting followers
of any of the āśramas to his home
and feeding them
is a rājā's gārhasthya duty,
O Yudhiṣṭhira.

26 Whoever is dedicated to the dharma
ordained by the Creator,
and faithfully
follows it,
obtains the fruits
of all the āśrama-stages.

27 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
That person in whom
all the guṇa-qualities
are in equilibrium
is the excellent one who gets the merits
of all āśrama-stages.

28 Yudhiṣṭhira! The king who honours
rank and position,
family lineage,
and the old and venerable,
gets the merits
of all the four āśrama-stages.

29 O tiger-among-men!
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
The rāja who respects country-dharma
and family-dharma
gets the merits
of all the four āśrama-stages.

30 O tiger-among-men!
The king who rewards
with gifts and titles
the right people at the right time
gets the merits of good people
following their āśramas.

31 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
That rājā who,
though restricted by the ten minor dharmas,
cherishes universal dharma,
the dharma of mankind,
gets the merits of all āśrama-stages.

32 O Bharata descendant!
Dharma-cherishing subjects
practising dharma in a kingdom,
and prospering,
pass on a share of their merits
to their king.

33 O tiger-among-men!
Any ruler who fails
to protect dharma-abiding subjects
in their practice of dharma
will get their defects
passed on to him.

34 O blameless Yudhiṣṭhira!
All those who help
a ruler to rule well
receive a share
of the merits of the dharma
of the subjects.

35 O tiger-among-men!
The learned say –
and it seems logical –
that the dharma
of the householder
excels all the other dharmas.

36 The men who treats everyone
as he treats himself,
who administers punishment
after curbing his anger,
will find happiness
now and hereafter.

37 The world's ocean is crossed by the boat
of Rāja-dharma.
Sattva-goodness is the energy,
dharma the sails.
With the breeze of selfless service,
swift is the speed.

38 When the kāma-desires of the heart
are gently silenced,
and sattva-goodness allowed
to take their place,
then alone becomes possible
an experience of Brahman.

39 O ruler of men!
O tiger-among-men!
When by the practice of yoga
inner happiness is attained,
then the all-protecting king
enjoys the fruits of dharma.

40 So get ready, Yudhiṣṭhira,
to protect Brahmins
of good karma
and devoted to study of the Vedas,
and protect also
all the others in the world.

41 O descendant of Bharata!
By protecting his people,
a ruler acquires
a hundred times
the dharma of forest-ascetics
and āśram-inmates.

42 O finest of the Pāṇḍavas!
I have described
the different kinds of dharmas.
You must now
apply yourself
to this eternal, well-trodden tradition.

43 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
O tiger-among-men!
If you devote yourself
selflessly
to the protection
of your subjects,
you will be cherishing
the four-āśrama dharma,
the four-caste dharma,
and single-pointed Dharma itself,
which is the all in all.

SECTION SIXTY-SEVEN

1 "You have explained, Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
said Yudhiṣṭhira, "the four castes
and the four āśramas. But what about
the country itself – its responsibilities?"

2 The coronation of a rājā (replied Bhīṣma)
is the country's chief responsibility.
Sleepless and weak is a rājā-less land,
prey to *dasyu*-robbers and looters.

3 Where there is no rājā,
there is no dharma.
The subjects of that kingdom
cannibalise each other.
Dhik! Shame on the kingdom
that has no rājā.

4 The sacred śruti-texts say:
"Honouring a rājā
is like honouring Indra.
A seeker of prosperity
should pūjā-respect a rājā
as he would Indra.

5 In my view, no one should live
in a rājā-less land.
Oblations offered in sacrifices
in a rājā-less land
are not carried by Agni
to the gods.

6 Should a powerful rājā,
eager to annex
a vulnerable weak land
that is rājā-less,
declare war
and launch an attack on it,

7 Its people should come forward
to welcome
and honour the invader.
Sensible advice, this –
for no wickedness is worse
than a rājā-less land.

8 If the powerful aggressor
decides to be lenient,
everything will work out right.
If he decides
to let loose his anger,
that land is doomed.

9 Miserable is the fate
of the cow, O rājā,
that is hard to milk.
But the cow
that is easily milked
lives comfortably.

10 People don't go about
twisting a stick
that is flexible.
The head that bows easily
is not the one
that gets thrashed.

11 O valiant Yudhiṣṭhira!
Respect the strong –
is the meaning of this metaphor.
The man who *praṇāmas* power
is the man
who *praṇāmas* Indra.

12 Those who seek their own prosperity
and protection
should first crown a rājā.
Wealth and wives
cannot be enjoyed
in a rājā-less land.

13 In a rājā-less land,
the wicked delight
in plundering others' wealth.
When their wealth is plundered,
they run for help
to a rājā.

14 Even the wicked are not safe.
One criminal's wealth
is plundered by two,
and the wealth of two
is at the mercy
of the many.

15 If you are not a slave,
you are forced
to become a slave.
Women are raped.
Which is why the gods created
protectors of people.

16 Without rulers in this world
to judge and punish,
the strong would gobble up
the weak,
like big fish swallowing
small fry.

17 This is what happened
in the distant past.
So I have heard.
Like big fish swallowing small fish,
men devoured each other,
and doomed mankind.

18 I have also heard:
Then they got together, and agreed on this:
"The foul-mouthed, the aggressive,
the seducer of others' wives,

19 The appropriator
of the wealth of others,
will be cast out of society."
This agreement was required
to restore faith
in civilised living;
it was followed, and, indeed,
normality returned.

20 After some time, troubled,
they approached
Pitāmaha Grandsire Brahmā:
"O Bhagavān Īśvara!
We are lord-less.
We will be ruined.

21 Give us a lord
who will be our protector
deserving of our pūjā-respect."
And so it was
that Brahmā asked Manu,
but Manu refused.

22 “I stay away from wickedness,”
    Manu said.
“Ruling a kingdom
    is exceedingly difficult.
Human beings are always
    devious and deceitful.”

23 The people of the earth said,
    “Do not fear.
Only the wicked will suffer.
    One-fiftieth
of all the animals
    that we possess,

24 One-fiftieth of the gold,
    a tenth of our grain,
we will give to your treasury.
    Our loveliest girls,
of marriageable age,
    we will bestow on you.

25 Like the gods who follow
    Mahendra-Indra,
the finest of our warriors
    who are expert
in the use of weapons
    will follow you.

26 Like Kubera protecting
    the ill-omened Nairṛtas,
you will be valiant
    and ever-victorious
and protect us
    and ensure our happiness.

27 And a fourth of all the dharma
    acquired by those
who are protected by you
    will be credited to you –
and it will become
    your dharma.

28 O rājā! Strengthened further
by the dharma
so happily acquired,
be our protector
as Śatakratu-Indra protects
the gods.

29 Be like the fierce-raged sun
girdling the earth
with your conquering career.
Strike down your enemies!
May victory
always be yours!"

30 Glorious with self-resplendence,
dazzling in the midst of all the people,
powerful,
mahā-energetic Manu
of mahā-lineage
proceeded on his mission.

31 Like the gods inspired
by the magnificence
of Mahendra-Indra,
the awe-struck people of the earth
began abiding
by their sva-dharma.

32 Like the rain-cloud Parjanya
fertilising the earth
with timely showers,
Manu struck down evil
and encouraged the people
to perform their sva-karma.

33 That is why it is essential
for all people
who desire their own prosperity
to arrange
so that they assemble together
to crown a rājā.

34 Like a disciple with bhakti
namaskāra-ing a guru,
like the gods revering
Devendra-Indra,
the people should honour
their rājā.

35 A man who is respected
by his own people
is respected by others also;
a man disregarded
by his own is disregarded
by others as well.

36 Pathetic is the condition
of a rājā
who is scorned by others.
Which is why
umbrellas, vehicles,
dresses, ornaments,

37 Food, and drinks,
mansions, seats,
beds and other conforts
and conveniences
should always be provided
to a rājā.

38 Thus he gets the support
of his people,
and in turn he protects them.
He becomes invincible.
He should be always simple
and speak sweetly to his subjects.

39 Let him show his gratitude
and his bhakti.
Let him be just.
Let him control his senses.
Let his eyes meet others' eyes gently,
sweetly, sincerely.

SECTION SIXTY-EIGHT

1 "O bull-brave Bharata Pitāmaha Bhīṣma!
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Why is it that Brahmins have described a rājā,
a ruler of men, as a god?"

2 O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
(replied Bhīṣma)
In this connection,
people speak of an ancient history –
the time when Vasumanas asked
Bṛhaspati this same question.

3 What they say is that
rājā Vasumanas, of Kosala,
of wisest men
the wisest,
approached mahā-ṛṣi Bṛhaspati
with this question.

4 Rājā Vasumanas
was a king
of gentleness
and humility.
He was devoted
to the welfare
of all people.
He approached
Bṛhaspati reverentially,
half-circling him
in *pradakṣiṇa*
and *praṇāma-ing* him
as ordained by tradition.

5 Because he desired
the good of all the worlds,
he asked
serene-in-dharma Bṛhaspati
about the governance of a kingdom
and his people's happiness.

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6 "O mahā-wise one!" asked Vasumanas.
"What makes
for a people's progress –
and what leads to their ruin?
By adoring whom do they attain
undecaying happiness?"

7 Questioned in this manner
by the Kosala ruler
of immeasurable energy,
tranquil-minded, mahā-wise Bṛhaspati
talked about how
a rājā should be respected.

8 "O mahā-wise one!" Bṛhaspati said.
"A rājā is the root
of the dharma of the world.
It is the rājā
who prevents people
from collective cannibalism.

9 It is the rājā who prevents people
from over-stepping
the limits of propriety,
and keeps them
within the bounds of dharma.
A rājā radiates glory.

10 O rājā! Till the moon shines,
till the sun rises,
all the world's creatures
move about in the dark,
and cannot see
each other;

11 And fish in shallow waters
and birds
in an unsafe forest
dart and flutter in panic,
and helplessly
hurt each other;

12 And it is very clear
that no one
thinks of the other,
and in the process
they succeed only
in destroying each other; –

13 Similarly, with no rājā
to check them,
people exploit each other
into collective ruin.
They are like cattle
without a leader.

14 With no rājā to protect them,
the wealth of the weak
will be snatched by the strong.
And if the weak
were so audacious as to resist,
they would be killed.

15 No one would be able to say,
'My wife is mine,
my son, my wealth, my house,'
without the protection of a rājā.
No property
would be safe.

16 With no rājā to protect
the people,
hardened criminals
would merrily make off
with vehicles and dresses
and precious gems.

17 With no rājā to protect
his people,
harassed dharma-abiding subjects
would be left
with no choice
but to turn to adharma.

18 With no rājā to protect
his people,
even the lives of mothers
and fathers,
elders, ācāryas, guests and gurus
would be in peril.

19 With no rājā to protect
his people,
the rich would have to face
threat and terror every day;
nothing they owned
would remain theirs.

20 With no rājā to protect
his people,
his subjects would start dying
before their time,
and a horrible hell overtake
the robber-ridden land.

21 With no rājā to protect
his people,
sexual promiscuity would flourish,
agriculture fail,
commerce get corrupted, dharma sink,
the three Vedas vanish.

22 With no rājā to protect
his people,
neglected would be yajñas
with lavish *dakṣiṇās*,
marriage become outdated,
and social life collapse.

23 With no rājā to protect
his people,
bulls would not impregnate cows,
milk would not get churned
into butter,
and cowsheds face ruin.

24 With no rājā to protect
his people,
fear and misery
would stalk the land,
and wails of 'Hai! Hai!'
poison the air.

25 With no rājā to protect
his people,
there would be no yajñas,
no year-long
strictly traditional sacrifices
with liberal *dakṣiṇās.*

26 With no rājā to protect
his people,
there would be no
snātaka-novitiate Brahmins
well-versed in the Vedas,
devoted to vows and tapasyā.

27 With no rājā to protect
his people,
abandoning dharma,
all would wound and kill each other;
only thieves and criminals
escape unpunished.

28 With no rājā to protect
his people,
thieves will steal things
from your very hands,
fear oust security,
and the terrorised run wild for safety.

29 With no rājā to protect
his people,
injustice would ravage the land,
caste-intermixture spread,
and famine lay waste
the land.

30 Protected by a rājā,
people sleep the sleep
that knows no fear;
if they so like,
they sleep without locking
the door of their house.

31 Because a dharma-devoted rājā
is ready to protect their rights,
people patiently
listen to slander
and tolerate assault, without taking the law
in their own hands.

32 If a lord-of-the-earth king
offers protection,
glitteringly ornamented ladies
can move about
freely and fearlessly everywhere,
without male escorts.

33 If a lord-of-the-earth king
offers protection,
dharma is observed,
mutual violence is eschewed,
and people practise fellow-feeling
and compassion.

34 If a lord-of-the-earth king
offers protection,
the three castes
perform mahā-yajñas,
and devote themselves
to acquiring learning.

35 If a lord-of-the-earth king
offers protection,
everything works smoothly.
Prosperity's root, agriculture,
flourishes,
guided by the three Vedas.

36 When a rājā, with the help
of a powerful army,
eases the burden of his subjects
by taking the burden of protection
on himself,
the whole world exults.

37 Who will deny pūjā-respect
to a person
whose absence
leads to deprivation
and whose presence
ensures prosperity?

38 Anyone who helps a rājā
to do what is beneficial,
and assists
in the administration of justice,
is victorious
now and hereafter.

39 And anyone who even thinks
of obstructing
the work of such a king,
gets nothing
but misery in this life
and hell hereafter.

40 'He's only a man' –
let no one say this
about an earth-lord king.
A king
is a mahā-god
in human form.

41 A king has five different forms
on five different
circumstances and occasions.
He becomes Agni,
Āditya, Mṛtyu, Vaiśravaṇa,
and Yama.

42 He is Agni the god of fire
when the rājā
is lied to and tricked,
because then
his incandescent wrath
scorches the culprits.

43 He is Āditya the sun god
when, with the help
of his spies and informants,
he goes about
observing his people
and ensuring their prosperity.

44 He is Antaka-Mṛtyu
the god of death
when in his wrath
he kills hundreds of criminals
together with their sons, grandsons
and other relatives.

45 He is Yama the Restrainer
when he punishes
the perpetrators of adharma
and rewards
with his compassion
the followers of dharma.

46 When he showers wealth
on those who work
for the welfare of the world,
and takes away
the precious gems
of those who harm the world,

47 When he provides *śrī*-prosperity
to some
and takes it away from others,
then the earth-lord,
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
becomes Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa the god of wealth.

48 Let no man of skill,
capable of hard work,
eager to acquire dharma,
free from malice,
ever get involved
in slandering a rājā.

49 Be he a rājā's son, or brother,
or close friend,
or even one
as close as the rājā's own ātman,
he cannot find happiness
by speaking ill of the rājā.

50 Fire, driven by its charioteer Wind,
blazes and destroys,
yet leaves
some remnant behind.
But a rājā's wrath is absolute,
all-exterminating.

51 Let a man look
on a rājā's protected possessions
from a far and safe distance.
Turn away from them
as you would
from death itself.

52 To steal from a rājā
is to die
like a deer tasting poison.
An intelligent man
guards a rājā's possessions
as he does his own.

53 The man who steals the wealth
of a rājā
will find himself plummeting
in a hell
vast and fearful
and prolonged and sense-killing.

54 Who will not revere the rājā –
who is Bhoja the Delighter,
Virāṭ the Colossal,
Samrāṭ the Emperor,
Kṣatriya the Powerful, Bhūpati the Earth-Lord,
Nṛpa the Protector?

55 Anyone who seeks prosperity,
gifted with intelligence and memory,
should discipline his ātman,
and control his senses,
and welcome protection
by a rājā.

56 And a rājā should see to it
that he pūjā-respects
a minister who is grateful,
wise, noble-minded, bhakti-loyal,
sense-restrained,
and dedicated to dharma.

57 A rājā should depend on a man
whose bhakti is strong,
who is educated, dharma-devoted,
sense-controlled, brave, idealistic,
and has the power
to act independently.

58 A rājā is the essential body
of the people,
and the people are the body of a rājā.
No country, no people without a rājā;
and no rājā
without country and people.

59 A rājā makes people
strong and confident.
A rājā makes people
weak and vulnerable.
To be at the receiving end
of a rājā's displeasure
is to be unhappy.
To be favoured by a rājā
is to be happy.

60 A rājā is
the heart of his people,
their glory,
their refuge,
their supreme happiness.
O Indra-among-men!
Protected by a rājā,
people attain the best
in this world
and in the next.

61 And a rājā also attains
the highest eternal state
if he governs his people
with senses restrained,
with truth and sympathy,
with the performance
of mahā-yajñas,
which ensure mahā-fame
and his presence in heaven.

62 Enlightened in this manner
by Aṅgirasa's son Bṛhaspati,
the finest-of-rājās –
valiant Vasumanas of Kosala –
assiduously devoted himself
to the proper governing
and protection of his people.

SECTION SIXTY-NINE

1 “What are the other special responsibilities
of an earth-lord?” asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
“How should he make secure the provinces?
How go about subduing his enemies?

2 What about the system of spies?
How inspire trust in the four castes?
And how, O descendant of Bharata,
inspire trust in servants, wives and sons?”

3 What are the priorites of a ruler,
or one in the position of a ruler,
(replied Bhīṣma)
a rājā’s responsibilities –
these I will tell you.
Listen carefully.

4 A rājā must first subdue
his own ātman
before he subdues his foes.
How can a lord of men
lord over others
if he cannot lord over himself?

5 Let him conquer his own five senses
before he thinks
of conquering his foes.
Only the conqueror of his senses
can succeed
in conquering his foes.

6 O Kaurava descendant Yudhiṣṭhira!
He must order
detachments of soldiers posted
for border security,
in forts, villages,
and public parks in cities.

7 O tiger-among-men!
In all major places
frequented by his subjects,
in all towns,
in royal mansions,
he must ensure security.

8 As for spies –
he must appoint only those
who are ordinary looking,
clever but blind, dumb and deaf seeming,
hunger-and-thirst-enduring,
after carefully screening them.

9 And he must ensure, mahārāja,
that these spies
keep a watchful eye
on his ministers,
on all his friends,
and on his sons.

10 Let him see to it that the spies
are not known
to each other
when they go about their business
of vigilance
in towns and provinces.

11 O bull-brave Bharata!
It is only
with the help of spies
planted in shops,
places of amusement, clubs,
haunts of beggars,

12 Gardens and public parks,
meetings of pāṇḍits,
in crossroads,
districts and sabhās,
and in the homes
of important people,

13 That a rājā can get to know,
if he is clever enough,
about the counter-espionage
of his enemies.
This is hugely beneficial,
O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira.

14 Should a king ever realise
the relative weakness
of his position,
he should consult his ministers
and work out a peace treaty
with his stronger neighbour.

15 O lord of the earth!
Let him appoint minister
any Kṣatriya, Vaiśya
or śāstra-learned Brahmin
who knows all
about the Principles of Punishment.

16 First, he should consult
the śāstra-learned Brahmin.
Then, let the earth-lord approach
the law-learned Kṣatriya.
Then, the Vaiśya or Śūdra
who seeks the king's welfare.

17 Let him work out a peace treaty
before his enemy
discovers his weakness.
An intelligent king is he
who turns every situation
to his advantage.

18 A talented, mahā-enterprising,
dharma-knowing,
virtuous neighbouring king
should always be made an ally
by a treaty based on dharma,
if a king desires his country's safety.

19 And if a mahā-minded rājā
find himself threatened,
he should swiftly execute
all the conspirators,
subverters and traitors
whom he had earlier overlooked.

20 An earth-ruler
should have absolutely no dealings
with anyone who can neither
help him or harm him,
and who there is no point
in saving from ruin.

21 If he decides to attack an enemy,
he must be sure
of his own strength.
If his enemy is without allies,
fighting elsewhere, or unprepared,
or militarily weak,

22 And if he is in full command
of his own army,
a confident king can happily
proceed to attack,
provided he has arranged
for the security of his capital.

23 No king, however, weak in valour
or military power,
should remain forever subjugated
by a stronger king.
He should covertly plan
to regain power.

24 War-weapons, arson, poison –
let him use these
to confound the enemy king
and his subjects,
and create rifts in his ministers
and favoured followers.

25 If a king genuinely desires
his kingdom's prosperity,
he should be wise enough
to realise that war
is not the way to achieve it.
According to Bṛhaspati,

26 Conciliation, gift-giving,
and spreading disaffection
are the three means
by which a rājā creates prosperity.
This is the prosperity that pleases
a paṇḍit-intelligent rājā.

27 O Kaurava descendant!
A sensible rājā
takes one-sixth of the income
of his subjects
as tax to meet the expenses
of protecting them.

28 Drunks, fanatics, thieves, swindlers,
fake god-men, rogues,
pimps, gamblers, forgers, bribe-takers –
the punitive tax, small or big,
on these ten adharma types
should be used be used for national security.

29 Of course a king
must look on his subjects
as he would his sons and grandsons,
but bhakti and affection
must be rejected when it comes
to dispensing justice.

30 When he hears both sides
of a legal dispute,
a rājā must be assisted by
worldly-wise experts.
An honest system of justice
is the backbone of a kingdom.

31 It is essential that he appoint
absolutely trustworthy officers
to supervise gold mines,
salt flats, granaries,
dock yards, naval installations,
and elephant pens.

32 Dharma-blessed is the rājā
who wields the rod of punishment
impartially.
Such a just king is praised
as the very embodiment
of dharma.

33 O descendant of Bharata!
It is required of a king
that he be proficient
in the Vedas and Vedāṅgas,
practise tapasyā,
perform yajñas, and be generous.

34 These virtues must always be
with a king,
for if he fails in justice,
how can he ever hope
to gain fame
and attain heaven?

35 If an intelligent earth-lord
is oppressed
by a very powerful
aggressive rājā,
he should seek refuge
in a fort.

36 First, he must ensure his safety
by taking the advice of friends;
then, find out ways
of ousting the aggressor
by conciliation, spread of disaffection,
and counter-attack.

37 In that case, he should move cattle
and other livestock
into the city streets,
and arrange entire village populations
to throng towns
and the outskirts of cities.

38 And, reassuring the officers
of his army
and his important wealthy subjects,
he should arrange
for their safety in secret,
secluded locations.

39 He should personally see
to the provision
of sufficient stocks of grain.
If this arrangement is unfeasible,
he should set fire
to the entire harvest.

40 He should also arrange to destroy
the food stocks
of his enemy,
in the fields and elsewhere,
by inciting the local people,
or ordering his soldiers.

41 He should blow up all the bridges
in all the rivers of his kingdom,
release the waters
in the tanks
and, if that fails,
poison the water-tanks.

42 Thinking of present and future need,
he should put aside
protecting an ally,
and side instead with a foe of his foe,
if that helps him
to win a battle.

43

A rājā should also demolish
all the minor forts in his kingdom,
and cut down
all the smaller trees
with the sole exception
of the sacred *caitya.*

44

All the branches
of all the large trees
must be chopped off,
but not a single leaf
of the sacred *caitya*
must be harmed.

45

He should raise the ramparts of the forts
and provide "sky-openings"
for shooting missiles,
and dig moats studded
with three-pointed stakes,
and fill them with crocodiles.

46

The walls should have openings
for free flow of air,
and these "doorways"
should be constructed
such that they can be
well-protected.

47

All these "doorways"
must be defended
by massive destructive weapons,
including fire-spitting *śataghnis*
under his own
personal command.

48

There should be ample stocks of fuel,
and wells dug
for supply of water.
The old wells
should be repaired,
the unused made serviceable.

49 All grass-and-straw-thatched houses
should be plastered afresh
with mud;
for fear of fire,
no grass stocked in houses
in the Caitra summer month.

50 Orders must be passed to ensure
the cooking of food only at night.
The only exception
for lighting a fire
in the daytime
is the sacred *agnihotr.*

51 And special care must be taken
with fires in smithies
and in maternity lying-in rooms.
Fire in a house
must always be hidden
from outside view.

52 For the safety of the city,
let it be proclaimed
by royal decree:
"Exemplary punishment
will be meted out
to lighters of daytime fires."

53 O finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
Beggars, drivers, eunuchs,
lunatics and actors
must be forced to leave the city;
serious consequences will follow
if this is not done.

54 And persons of the right caste
should be employed
to spy on citizens
on crossroads,
in *tīrtha* resting-places, sabhās,
and private homes.

55 An earth-ruler
should order the construction
of wide-spaced rāja-mārga streets
flanked by shops
and places for distribution
of water.

56 Grain shops, arsenals,
quarters for warriors,
stables for horses,
elephant compounds,
and camps
for soldiers,

57 Trenches, alleys,
and gardens in royal mansions –
should be constructed
and their locations
kept completely secret,
O Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira.

58 A rājā harassed by a powerful foe
bent on ruining him
should see to it
that he has enough wealth,
and stocks of oil, fat, honey,
ghee, medicines,

59 Charcoal, kuśa and *muñja* grass,
palāśa-leaves,
arrows, scribes and planners,
and grass,
and all varieties of arrows
tipped with poison.

60 Also a large stock
of śakti-spears, *ṛṣṭi*-swords,
prāsa barbed darts,
and other weapons –
all essential war-weapons
for a ruler-of-men.

61 Medicines and drugs of all kinds,
roots and fruits,
and the four kinds of physicians –
poison-removers,
wound-healers, disease-diagnosers,
and faith-curers –

62 Should be with a king,
including actors and dancers,
wrestlers and māyā-magic-makers,
because they give colour
to a capital,
and delight the citizens.

63 Officers, ministers, citizens,
neighbouring kings –
if a ruler has misgivings
about any of these,
he should quickly bring those concerned
under his control.

64 O Indra-among-rājās!
And all
who successfully implement his orders,
should be pūjā-respected
with rewards of money and gifts
and appreciative speeches.

65 O Kaurava descendant!
After routing
or killing an enemy,
a rājā should free himself from debt
by observing
what the śāstras have ordained.

66 I will tell you now
of the seven
a rājā should always cherish and protect:
his own ātman,
his ministers, the treasury,
the system of justice, his friends,

67 The provinces, and the capital.
O Kaurava descendant!
These are the seven limbs
of his kingdom,
and their health depends
on how they are cared for.

68 O tiger-among-men!
The six guṇas,
the three togethers,
and the three supreme togethers –
a king who knows these well
enjoys the whole world.

69 Let me explain the six guṇas to you,
Yudhiṣṭhira:
reigning peacefully
after signing a treaty with an enemy,
planning and implementing an attack
on an enemy,

70 Relaxing after sowing dissension
in enemy ranks,
ordering military exercises
to frighten an enemy,
confusing an enemy,
making alliance with a formidable king.

71 Listen carefully now
to what are the three togethers.
Kṣaya-decline, *sthāna* status quo,
and *vṛddhi* progress
are the three togethers.
The three supreme togethers

72 Are Dharma, Artha and Kāma.
All three need to be cherished.
With dharma,
an earth-ruler
can reign over the earth
for a very long time.

73 Son of Yādavī Pṛthā-Kuntī!
    Bhadraṁ te!
May you prosper!
    Listen to the two-śloka song
of Bṛhaspati, Aṅgirasa's son,
    on this:

74 "Having done his duties,
    having made fast
the earth, and protected
    his cities, having passed
these tests, a king
    finds heaven at last.

75 This rājā does not need
    tapasyā-austerities;
this rājā does not need
    yajña-charities.
he is Dharma personified –
    all dharmas are his."

76 Uśanas-Śukra has a few ślokas
    concerning this, O king.
Listen to them, Yudhiṣṭhira.
    They are the essence
of the Principles of Punishment
    and the three togethers.

77 The success of a king – its root –
    depends on these:
the Karma of Bhārgava-Aṅgirasa,
    the sixteen limbs
of power, poison, māyā, fate
    and human effort.

78 Let a ruler of the earth
    base his reign
on the fort of the three togethers
    which slopes
on its eastern
    and on its northern sides.

79 Even the gods cannot defeat
an earth-ruler
who has knowledge of the fort
that is built
on the six, the five, the ten,
and the eight togethers.

80 A rājā should not take advice
from women and fools,
nor listen to fate-stricken
defective minds,
and minds ignorant of the Vedas,
because these do not follow the norm.

81 Kingdoms dominated by women,
and deserted by the learned,
fall in the clutches
of foolish ministers,
and become non-entities,
like a drop of dried-up water.

82 A king should heed the advice
of only those ministers
who are deeply learned,
skilled in various activities,
and have proved their worth
in times of war.

83 That king alone gains victory
in a war who employs
fate, free-will, and the threefold
dharma-artha-kāma,
and *praṇāmas* gods and Brahmins
before marching into battle.

84 "The Principles of Punishment and the rājā
together achieve results,"
said Yudhiṣthira.
"How does this work,
O Pitāmaha Bhīṣma?
This I need to know."

85 O Bharata rājā! (replied Bhīṣma)
Let me explain
in plain language
how both king and subjects
receive mahā-blessed benefits
from the Principles of Punishment.

86 The proper administration of Daṇḍa-nīti
drives the four castes
into observing their sva-dharma
with gentle coercion,
and prevents them
from slipping into adharma.

87 Enconraged in this way
by the Principles of Punishment
to do their sva-karma,
the four castes
cont'nue the tradition peacefully
and fearlessly;

88 Then the three upper castes
go about their duties
as ordained by tradition.
You will realise
that this ensures
the happiness of all people.

89 Is the rājā the creation of Kāla,
or does Kāla
create the rājā?
No need to think twice –
it is the rājā who creates
the spirit of his time.

90 If the rājā implements Daṇḍa-niti
strictly and fully,
the Kṛta-yuga Age of Truth
gets created.
So the rājā is the creator
of Kāla.

91

There is nothing but dharma
in such a Kṛta-yuga;
no sign of adharma at all.
And the four castes –
they find no reason
to delight in adharma.

92

And there is no doubt at all,
in such an age
people attain effortlessly
all their hearts' desires,
and the wisdom of the Vedas
becomes perfectly practicable.

93

Soothing and salubrious
become the seasons,
soft the voices,
sweet the speech,
serene and simple
the minds of human beings.

94

No diseases
afflicting anyone.
All long-lived.
No widows
No one mean
and miserly.

95

Harvests aplenty
without tilling the fields.
Luxuriant vegetation.
A plethora
of barks, leaves,
fruits and roots.

96

No adharma anywhere.
Only dharma
everywhere.
This, Yudhiṣṭhira,
is the dharma
of the Kṛta-yuga.

97

When a rājā makes use
of three-fourths
of the Principles of Punishment,
omitting one-fourth,
the Treta-yuga
commences.

98

One-fourth inauspiciousness
trails behind
three-fourths auspiciousness.
Harvests are there,
needing tilling with toil;
as does vegetation.

99

When a rājā makes use
of half of Daṇḍa-nīti,
omitting the other half,
the Kāla
known as Dvāpara
commences.

100

Half of auspiciousness
trails behind
half of inauspiciousness.
Tilling with toil
makes the earth yield
only half a harvest.

101

When an earth-ruler
discards Daṇḍa-nīti altogether,
and begins
variously persecuting
his subjects,
Kali has arrived.

102

In the Kali-yuga,
adharma is rampant,
dharma nowhere.
The minds and hearts
of the four castes
swerve from sva-dharma.

103 Śūdras survive by begging.
Brahmins become
servants and menials.
The property of people
is imperilled,
caste-intermixture is common.

104 The performance of Vedic rituals
starts producing
the very opposite results.
The seasons
do not delight any more.
Epidemics spread.

105 The voices, the complexions,
the minds and hearts of men
become weak and ugly.
Stricken with disease,
men suffer,
and die untimely deaths.

106 And women are widowed,
and men become
violent and cruel.
Rain falls
out of season;
crops perish.

107 When a rājā fails to rule
his people
as required by Daṇḍa-nīti,
the rasas, the juices,
the moisture, the sap of the earth
dries up.

108 The rājā is the creator
of the Kṛta-yuga,
the Treta, the Dvāpara;
and the rājā
is the cause
of the fourth yuga also.

109 An unending heaven is the reward
of the rājā
who creates the Kṛta-yuga;
a heaven not unending
of the creator
of the Treta-yuga.

110 Getting what his merits deserve
is the rājā
who creates the Dvāpara-yuga.
The creator
of the Kali-yuga gets a realm
of unending evil.

111 That doer of wicked karma
must suffer
a perpetual hell.
The wickedness
of his subjects he suffers,
together with his.

112 Keeping Daṇḍa-nīti in mind,
a Kṣatriya
should always try to acquire
what he does not have,
and preserve and increase
what he has.

113 It is absolutely certain
that if Daṇḍa-nīti
is correctly administered,
it will help people
like a mother and father
caring for their children.

114 O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira!
Never forget:
Daṇḍa-nīti is the mainstay
of a people.
No dharma is greater for a rājā
than Daṇḍa-nīti.

115 So, O Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira,
follow dharma,
and protect your subjects
with the Principles of Punishment.
If you cherish your people
with this ideal,
you will attain a heaven
very difficult to attain.

SECTION SEVENTY

1 "O finest of men of noble character,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira, "how does a rājā
go about easily acquiring happiness
in this world and in the next?"

2 There are thirtysix guṇas
which give lustre to character (said Bhīṣma).
An already virtuous king gains
even more fame by abiding by these.

3 One: Apply dharma, but not harshly.
Two: Have faith in Divinity,
but respect the faith of others.
Three: Acquire wealth,
without exploitation.
Four : Pursue kāma, without excess.

4 Five: Be pleasant, but not obsequious.
Six: Be brave without bragging.
Seven: Be generous,
but not to the undeserving.
Eight: Show your prowess,
without being cruel.

5 Nine: Shun the wicked.
Ten: Avoid clashing
with relatives and friends.
Eleven: Distrust spies
who have no bhakti.
Twelve: Work without complaining.

6 Thirteen: Never disclose plans
to the wicked. Fourteen:
Never praise yourself.
Fifteen: Never take away the wealth
of a good man.
Sixteen: Never supplicate a mean man.

7 Seventeen: Never convict
without a full investigation.
Eighteen: Keep secrets secret.
Nineteen : Never reward the greedy.
Twenty: Never trust anyone
who has harmed you.

8 Twentyone: Never be jealous of your wife.
Twentytwo: A king must be just,
not compassionate.
Twentythree: Don't succumb to women.
Twentyfour: Eat good,
not rich food.

9 Twentyfive: Respect the pūjā-deserving.
Twentysix: Serve gurus and elders
without hypocrisy.
Twentyseven: Worship the gods humbly.
Twentyeight: A mass wealth
without trickery.

10 Twentynine: Give up stubbornness,
be flexible.
Thirty: show skill only when it needs to be shown.
Thirtyone: Don't expect mokṣa for being good.
Thirtytwo: Don't slight a person
after favouring him.

11 Thirtythree: Never strike anyone
without knowing the facts.
Thirtyfour: Don't mourn dead foes.
Thirtyfive: Control sudden bursts of temper.
Thirtysix: Be gentle,
but not with the guilty.

12 If you want to prosper,
keep these in mind,
for the good of your kingdom.
Fear and ruin
face the king
who prefers to behave otherwise.

13 The king who cherishes these guṇas
is blessed with good fortune in this life,
and attains heaven
in the life hereafter.

14 Listening to the advice
of Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
supremely intelligent Yudhiṣṭhira,
surrounded
by his Pāṇḍava brothers
and the kings,
resolved to abide by it.

SECTION SEVENTY-ONE

1 "Pitāmaha Bhīṣma, "said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"how should a rājā go about
protecting his subjects, free from problems,
and without offending the tenets of dharma?"

2 Let me briefly tell you, O rājā,
(replied Bhīṣma)
the nature of everlasting dharma,
for going into detail
over these dharmas
will mean an unending discourse.

3 When dharma-devoted, śruti-learned
Veda-wise Brahmins,
graced with guṇa-glory,
come to your house,
you should welcome them
with worshipful respect.

4 Stand up when they enter,
and receive them
by touching their feet;
after which,
perform the required rituals
with the help of your purohita.

5 After performing the dharma-rituals
and other auspicious rites,
you should request them
to chant benedictions
for your kingdom's prosperity,
and victory in battle.

6 O descendant of Bharata!
A king should be sincere;
should face facts
with patience
and intelligence;
should control kāma and anger.

7 A rājā who is so foolish
as to run after *artha*
through kāma and anger,
will soon discover
he has found neither dharma
nor *artha.*

8 Never employ foolish persons
in matters
involving kāma and *artha.*
Seek the help of those
who are intelligent
and not greedy.

9 If you empower a man
driven by kāma and anger
to pursue *artha,*
you will soon find him
fleecing your subjects
with devious schemes.

10 The royal treasury should be filled
with a one-sixth income tax,
fines imposed upon the guilty,
and śāstra-ordained levies
on merchants and traders
protected by the king.

11 With this wealth obtained
by dharma-approved means,
a rājā should so administer
his kingdom
that he is tirelessly working
for their welfare.

12 Admired and cherished by all
is the king
who, controlling kāma and prejudice,
with liberal gifts,
with dharma and justice
protects his subjects.

13 Never fill your treasury
with wealth
acquired by greed and adharma.
Those who violate the śāstras
are always unsure
about dharma and artha.

14 A rājā who violates the śāstras
achieves neither dharma nor artha.
Whatever wealth
he succeeds
in getting is squandered
in useless pursuits.

15 A king who is so foolish
as to tax his subjects excessively,
in violation
of what the śāstras advise,
is in reality
harming himself.

16 A milk-thirsty man
does not cut off the udders
of a cow to slake his thirst.
No oppressed kingdom
ever brings prosperity
to its royal oppressor.

17 Treat a cow tenderly,
and milk
will be yours in plenty.
Protect a kingdom properly,
and enjoy
the fruits.

18 If a kingdom is cared for
with dedication,
and law and order
given top priority,
the royal exchequer
will always be overflowing.

19 Like a gratified mother
giving milk to her baby,
the earth,
protected by a rājā,
pours out an abundance
of golden milk-and-honey.

20 Be a gardener, O rājā,
cherishing and nourishing trees
for flowers,
not a charcoal-gatherer,
burning down forests
to gather fuel.
This is the way
to enjoy the earth forever.

21 Should an enemy attack and loot
your treasury – no matter –
calmly continue your prudent policy
of taxing your subjects, all except Brahmins.

22 O descendant of Bharata!
No need to tell you
what to do when you are affluent.
Even in financial straits,
you should not look to inconveniencing
even wealthy Brahmins.

23 Protect them, comfort them,
give them whatever wealth
you can afford to give,
and in this way
ensure for yourself a heaven
very difficult to achieve.

24 O delighter of the Kauravas!
Use this dharma
for the protection of your people.
You will earn
supreme merit
and endless fame.

25 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira!
If you continue
to cherish your subjects
with dharma,
you will never regret it,
never face problems.

26 No greater dharma for a rājā
than the protection
and prosperity of his people.
Protection of all creatures
and profound concern for them –
that is true dharma.

27 That is the reason
why those who know dharma
say that the supreme dharma
of a rājā is seen
when his compassion for all life
is revealed.

28 If a rājā neglects to protect
his subjects from fear
for even one day,
he will have
to suffer for this crime
for a thousand years.

29 And if he cherishes his subjects
with dharma
for even one day,
the dharma he acquires
will get him the fruits of heaven
for ten thousand years

30 The regions gained by followers
of *gārhasthya*,
brahmacarya and *vānaprastha*
stages of life
are gained in one second
by a rājā who rules by dharma.

31 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Steady yourself,
and put this dharma in practise.
Great merit
will be yours;
you will never regret it.

32 A mahā-glorious heaven
will be yours, O Pāṇḍava.
It is not possible for a non-rājā
to follow this dharma.

33 Only a rājā, and none else,
can attain
the fruits of this dharma.
Patient you are.
Rule your kingdom with dharma.
Gratify Indra with soma-juice,
satisfy the desires
of your well-wishers.

SECTION SEVENTY-TWO

1 As his rājā-purohita (continued Bhīṣma),
a rājā should appoint
a person who appreciates his good deeds
and criticises his misdeeds.

2 There is an ancient story
concerning this
which learned people tell
about a discussion
between Ilā's son Purūravas
and Mātaris van.

3 "How was the Brahmin born?"
asked Mātariśvan.
"And the other three castes?
And how did the Brahmin
become the foremost caste?
I am eager to know."

4 "O finest of rājās!"
replied Mātariśvan.
"From Brahmā's mouth
came the Brahmins,
the Kṣatriyas from his arms,
the Vaiśyas from his thighs.

5 O bull-brave Bharata!
The fourth caste, the Śūdras,
emerged
from the feet of Brahmā,
in order to serve
the first three castes.

6 From the very beginning,
the Brahmin was born
as the lord of all creatures,
to preserve
and protect Dharma-Kośa,
the Treasury of Dharma.

7 The second caste, the Kṣatriyas
were created
to wield
the rod of punishment
and protect the people
of the world.

8 The Vaiśyas were created to support
the other castes
by agriculture and trade,
and the Śūdras
to serve the other castes.
So Brahmā ordained."

9 "O Vāyu-Mātriśvan! Tell me,"
said Aila-Purūravas,
"this wealth-filled earth,
to whom does it belong –
Brahmin or Kṣatriya?
Whose is it, according to dharma?"

10 "According to the learned in dharma,"
replied Vāyū,
"because of priority of birth
and seniority,
everything in this world belongs
to Brahmins.

11 A Brahmin eats his own food,
lives in his own house,
gives his own gifts.
He is the guru,
he is the eldest,
he is the best.

12 If her husband is absent, a wife takes
as husband her younger brother-in-law.
If a Brahmin is absent, the earth
takes as her husband the Kṣatriya.
This is the first principle. In a crisis,
however, exceptions can be made.

[XII:72:13-18]

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13 If you wish to follow
your sva-dharma
and gain a place in heaven,
then you should give to Brahmins
whatever territory
you have conquered –

14 Provided they know śruti,
are noble-charactered,
wise-in-dharma,
devoted to tapasyā,
true to their sva-dharma,
and not greedy for wealth.

15 Who with his clear intelligence
guides a rājā
on the right path,
and who is highborn,
gifted with practical wisdom,
who is softspoken,

16 Who with his varied
and wonderful eloquence
shows a rājā the ideal
path to prosperity, –
such a Brahmin's dharma
should inspire a rājā.

17 A wise king, who assiduously
practises the dharma of a Kṣatriya,
who is free
of *ahaṁkāra*-ego,
will get lasting fame
by listening to a Brahmin adviser;

18 And part of the merits
of the dharma he gains
will belong to the rāja-purohita.
Under the benign protection
of the rājā,
all his subjects

19 Pursue their sva-dharmas,
    and fearlessly
walk the path of rectitude.
    And the dharma-merits
gained by them
    under the rājā's protection –

20 One-fourth of those dharma-merits
    are enjoyed
by the rājā as his share,
    Gods, humans,
pitṛs, gandharvas, *uraga*-serpents,
    and rākṣasas–

21 All depend upon yajña-sacrifices.
    Without a rājā,
no such yajñas are possible.
    The gods
and *pitṛ*-ancestors
    subsist on yajña-offerings.

22 And it is a rājā's dharma
    to sponsor
the performance of such yajñas.
    In summer,
people seek relief in shade,
    water and breeze;

23 In winter, they are comforted
    by warm clothing,
by fire, and sunlight.
    Sound, touch, rasa-taste,
form and scent
    delight the common man.

24 But none of these
    will give any happiness
to a person afflicted by fear.
    Mahā-blessed is the fear-dispeller.
No gift is greater
    than a fear-free life.

[XII:72:25; 73:1-5]

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25 The rājā is Indra.
The rājā is Yama.
The rājā is Dharma.
Multi-formed
is the rājā,
the sustainer of all.

SECTION SEVENTY-THREE

1 The rājā should appoint as purohita
(continued Bhīṣma) a person
who is learned in the śrutis, and understands
the subtleties of dharma-and-artha.

2 O rājā! Fortunate is the rājā,
and his subjects,
whose purohita is a dharmātmā
who has all the guṇa-talents,
and skilled
in advising on policy,

3 Because he ensures their prosperity
in dharma-artha-and-kāma.
Uśanas-Śukra has a śloka-song on this
to which you should listen, Yudhiṣṭhira:

4 "A rājā with no purohita
is rightly styled
as a rājā to be treated
like a person defiled.
Rākṣasa, antigods, *piśācas,*
serpents, birds and foes
will constantly contribute
to such a rājā's woes."

5 His subjects should always acquaint
a rājā
with what is required,
what improvements should be made,
what auspicious rituals performed,
and inner apartments investigated.

6 Songs and dances intended
for the entertainment
of the earth-ruler,
and oblations to the Viśva-devas
should be approved
by the purohita.

7 A purohita must excel
even the king
who is born in a most favourable
constellation influence,
and who is proficient
in all the rāja-śāstras.

8 And a purohita should preferably
be with that rājā
who knows how to deal
with crises and emergencies,
and has the means to demolish
the power of his enemy.

9 If both rājā and purohita
are full of śraddhā,
follow dharma, and practise tapasyā,
the prosperity
of subjects, gods, *pitṛs* and children
is assured.

10 When this kind of meeting
of mind and heart
between Kṣatriya and Brahmin
takes place,
the subjects of a kingdom
are overjoyed.

11 Differences between the two
spell disaster
for the subjects of a kingdom,
because Brahmin and Kṣatriya
are the two
chief castes.

12 In this connection is an old story
of a discussion between Kaśyapa
and Aila-Purūravas
which I will now narrate to you, Yudhiṣṭhira.

13 Aila-Purūravas said:
"What happens
when Brahmin falls out with Kṣatriya,
and Kṣatriya with Brahmin?
Which of the two
should others turn to for shelter?
Which is superior?"

14 "When Brahmin and Kṣatriya quarrel,"
replied Kaśyapa,
"doom descends on the kingdom.
This you should know.
Looters despoil it,
exploiting and enslaving
all the four castes.

15 When Kṣatriyas and Brahmins
fall apart,
the sacred texts get neglected,
and children
do not prosper,
milk is not churned,
yajñas are not performed.
Brahmin children
stop studying sacred texts.

16 Wealth deserts the homes
of Kṣatriyas
in a kingdom
where Kṣatriyas despise Brahmins.
Their children neither study
nor perform yajñas.
They become *dasyu*-robbers
and indulge
in indiscriminate theft
and violence.

17 Only by mutual respect
will Brahmin and Kṣatriya prosper.
Kṣatriya progress depends on the Brahmin,
Brahmin progress on the Kṣatriya.

18 If the long-standing friendship
between Brahmin
and Kṣatriya remains unbroken,
mahā-progress results.
If it is shattered,
confusion and gloom
overtake the world.

19 No man can hope to cross
the mahā-ocean
in a puny boat.
Confusion abounding,
the four castes
lose direction
and are ruined.

20 Water the Brahmin-tree,
find honey and gold.
Desert the Brahmin-tree,
find tears and despair.

21 No wonder the gods withhold rain
from a land
where Brahmins forsake brahmacarya
and neglect
the sacred texts;
instead, the land is stricken
with famine and calamity.

22 Fear faces a Kṣatriya rājā
in whose kingdom
a woman or Brahmin-killer
is not blamed
in a sabhā,
and dares even the rājā
to punish him.

23 When such crimes are rampant,
O Aila-Purūravas,
Rudra himself, the god Śiva,
makes his appearance.
It is the wicked
inviting their own doom –
and Rudra-Śiva destroys
indiscriminately:
the good and the evil, both."

24 Aila-Purūravas asked:
"O Kaśyapa!
From where does Śiva-Rudra come?
And how?
What we see is:
creatures killing creatures.
What place has Śiva-Rudra
in this?
This I would like you
to explain."

25 "Rudra dwells," replied Kaśyapa,
"in the hearts of men;
he is their very ātman,
you might say.
He destroys his own body
and the bodies of others.
He is like
a fierce storm, they say;
like a massive cloud."

26 "No storm kills," said Aila.
"No cloud-god kills
with fierce showers.
By themselves, no.
But together,
they can be fatal.
Similarly,
obsessed by kāma-lust and hate,
a bewildered man kills.
Is that so?"

27

"One Jātaveda fire,"
replied Kaśyapa,
"blazing in one house,
sets on fire
the four quarters,
an entire village.
This god stupefies one sense,
then all; and then,
exterminates good and bad alike."

28

"If the good and the bad,"
asked Aila,
"the virtuous and the wicked,
are doomed
to suffer the same punishment,
why should men
do good deeds?
Why should they
refrain at all
from doing wicked deeds?"

29

"If a good man
does not forsake
the company of wicked men,
his mere association
gets him punished
when they are punished.
Fire consumes wet wood
along with dry wood.
Give up evil company."

30

"The earth," said Aila,
"is gracious to the good,
and gracious to the wicked.
The sun shines equally
on the good
and the wicked.
Wind blows equally
for good and wicked.
Water cleans equally
the good and the wicked."

[XII:73:31-34]

31 “O rāja-kumāra! Prince!”
replied Kaśyapa.
“That is what happens
in this world.
It is not what happens
in the other world.
Very different is what happens
to the good and the bad
after they die.

32 Honey-sweet is the world
of the virtuous after death.
It dazzles like gold,
it tastes
like amṛta-ambrosia,
the nectar of immortality.
No death there,
no old age, no grief –
there the brahmacārī
enjoys true bliss.

33 For the wicked, there is hell,
the depths
of darkness, and despair,
and doom.
There, the doer
of evil karma
suffers for countless years,
endlessly grieving
his despicable deeds.

34 Discord between Brahmin
and Kṣatriya
is the beginning
of unbearable griefs
for the subjects
of a kingdom.
Which is the reason
why a king
should seek the services
of a virtuous purohita.

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35 The choosing
of a purohita
is the priority.
Then comes the coronation.
This is dharma-ordained.
According to dharma,
a Brahmin
is the foremost.

36 According to the learned,
since the Brahmin
was created first,
as the eldest
he has the right
to the best in the world.

37 Priority of birth entitles him
to respect and pūjā-reverence.
Dharma ordains that he be given
whatever is the best and finest.

38 It is fitting
that a powerful rājā
should recognise
and respect this tradition.
It is the Brahmin
who makes possible Kṣatriya progress,
and Kṣatriya
Brahmin progress.

39 This is the reason
a rājā
should make special effort
to offer pūjā-respect
to a Brahmin.
A rāja-purohita
is not only the swāmi
of the rājā
but also of his subjects."

SECTION SEVENTY-FOUR

1 O rājā ! (said Bhīṣma) A land's rise and fall,
it is said, depends upon the rājā.
But the rise and fall of the rājā
depends upon the rājā's purohita.

2 Happy is the kingdom the invisible dangers
to whose people are removed
by the purohita, and visible dangers
removed by the rājā.

3 In this connection is cited
as an example
the ancient story
of a discussion
between rājā Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera
and Mucukunda.

4 Having conquered the entire earth,
lord-of-the earth Mucukunda,
in order to test
his strength,
attacked the ruler
of Alakā, Kubera.

5 Rājā Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera
deployed his entire army of rākṣasas,
and this force
of malign Nairṛtas
began slaughtering
the soldiers of Mucukunda.

6 Seeing the total annihilation
of his army,
lord-of-men Mucukunda,
a foe-crushing king,
put the blame
on his learned purohita.

7 So that finest-of-knowers-
    of-dharma Vāsiṣṭha,
with severe tapasyā,
    routed the rākṣasas,
and guided the king
    to the path of victory.

8 After the systematic rout
    of his rākṣasas,
rājā Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera
    favoured Mucukunda
with a darshan,
    and said;

9 The lord of wealth said:
    "Many other rājās,
as powerful as you,
    aided by purohitas,
have come to me,
    but never the way you have.

10 Powerful lords-of-the-earth,
    skilled in war-weapons all of them;
and they knew me
    as dispenser
of joy and sorrow,
    and paid homage to me.

11 Show me the valour
    of your own arms!
What makes you so proud,
    if all you do is
depend on the power
    of a Brahmin?"

12 This so infuriated Mucukunda
    that he replied
to the lord-of-all-wealth
    with these unmalicious
and unconfused words,
    based on law and reason:

13 "Self-Born Svayambhū Brahmā
created Brahmin and Kṣatriya
together.
If they work
at cross-purposes,
the world will be ruined.

14 Tapasyā and mantra
comprise the strength
of a Brahmin.
Weapons and muscle-power
comprise the strength
of a Kṣatriya.

15 O ruler of Alakā!
The two together
protect kingdom and people.
I have followed
that principle.
Why blame me?"

16 Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera said to rājā Mucukunda
and his purohita:
"Unless fate wills it, I do not give away
a kingdom to anyone;

17 And unless fate wills it,
I do not take away
a kingdom
from anyone.
Realise this, O earth-lord!
Still, I give you the kingdom.
Take it."
Mucukunda replied:

18 "O lord of the earth!
I do not enjoy a kingdom
gifted to me.
The kingdom I want
as the kingdom I take
by the strength of my arms."

19 This assertion of rājā Mucukunda,
so deeply rooted
in Kṣatriya-dharma,
and presented
with such conviction,
astonished Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera.

20 And so it was
that rājā Mucukunda,
abiding by Kṣatriya-dharma,
continued to rule a kingdom
won by the strength
of his arms.

21 A dharma-dedicated rājā,
with the advice
of a Brahmin,
is able to subjugate
the entire earth,
and gain mahā-glory.

22 A Brahmin
should be meticulous
in the performance
of his daily devotions,
and a Kṣatriya
should proceed
along the ideals
of the śāstras.
Everything in this world –
every thing –
is under their control,
and belongs to them.

SECTION SEVENTY-FIVE

1 “Tell me, Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,
asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
“the ways by which a king
ensures the progress of his people,
and gains merit
for himself.”

2 O Bharata descendant! (replied Bhīṣma)
Gift-giving, yajña-performance,
fasting, tapasyā, happily protecting
his subjugate – these are the ways.

3 A rājā dedicated to dharma
who thus cares for his subjects
should stand up
when welcoming
and pūjā-respecting dharma-rich citizens,
and give them gifts.

4 Whatever dharma is pūjā-respected
by a rājā
is pūjā-respected by all,
because the example
set by a rājā is the example
cherished by all.

5 Like Death with his punishing rod,
a king must always be ready
to strike down enemies.
Dasyu-robbers
must be everywhere exterminated.
No mercy for them.

6 O descendant of Bharata!
A fourth part
of the dharma
acquired by protected subjects
is earned by the rājā
who protects them.

7 A fourth part of the merit
acquired by subjects
through studies, gifts, yajñas,
homa-libations and worship
becomes the rājā's
who protects by dharma.

8 O descendant of Bharata!
A fourth part
of the ill consequences
of a people's inauspicious deeds
goes to the rājā
who fails to protect his subjects.

9 O protector of the earth!
According to some,
he gets the full adharma,
according to others, half,
if he is given
to cruelty and lying.

10 Let me tell you how a rājā
can expiate misbehaviour.
If he cannot recover
and return the wealth stolen
to its rightful owner,
he should compensate the owner
with that amount
taken from the exchequer.

11 All the castes should protect
a Brahmin's wealth as they would
the Brahmin himself. A Brahmin-molester
should be exiled from the kingdom.

12 Where the wealth of Brahmins
is protected,
everything else is safe,
because the king
is then blessed with the grace
of grateful Brahmins.

13

All creatures seek the grace
of Parjanya rain-clouds;
all birds seek the shelter
of shade-giving trees.
All people seek life-protection
from a dedicated king.

14

No rājā can protect
his people
if kāma rules his ātman
and his intelligence,
if he is cruel and violent
and avaricious.

15

"I do not want to rule,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"because I seek happiness.
I wanted to rule
for dharma's sake.
It seems there is no dharma in it.

16

What will I do
with a kingdom
that has no dharma in it?
Better that I go
and find my dharma
in a forest.

17

No rod of punishment, there,
in the forest.
I will control my senses,
I will cherish dharma,
I will be a muni,
subsisting on roots and fruits."

18

How well I know (replied Bhīṣma)
how deeply
your heart cherishes non-cruelty.
But you cannot
rule a kingdom
by gentleness and non-cruelty.

19 You are gentle, you are wise,
you are a man of true dharma.
But people
will brand you a eunuch
if you practise
dharma and compassion.

20 Why not follow the life chosen
by your fathers
and grandfathers?
The way you want
to live your life,
is not the way of a rājā.

21 This is troubling you,
this life of inoffensiveness
that you wish to live,
and it will not get you
the fruits of dharma
that protecting your subjects will.

22 *Tāta!* Dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
What you so wisely and intensely
want for yourself
is not what Pāṇḍu
and your mother Kuntī
wanted for you.

23 You father Pāṇḍu wanted you
to be valiant,
strong, and truthful.
And Kuntī
wanted you to be glorious
and mahā-generous.

24 Yajña-*svāhā* chants
and śrāddha-*svadhā* chants
are offered by men to gods
and *pitṛ*-ancestors.
Gods and *pitṛs* expect them
from their children.

25 Whether dharma or adharma,
gift-giving,
studies, yajñas,
and protection of your subjects –
you were born
to fulfil these responsibilities.

26 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
These responsibilities
can become burdens
difficult to carry,
but they are the ones
that will bring you fame.

27 A person who discharges
his responsibilities
with a disciplined mind
never incurs blame –
he is the one
whose life finds fulfilment.

28 No matter how firm his dharma,
no householder,
no rājā, no brahmacārī
can be said
to have followed his ideal
with perfect success.

29 No matter how small or trivial,
work done with dedication
is magnificent.
Do something! Don't sit idle.
The worst criminal
is the nothing-doer.

30 A rājā can succeed only
if a highborn
and dedicated-to-dharma man
is elevated
to a post of advisory eminence
and influence.

31 And as soon as a dharma-dedicated rājā
begins ruling,
he should start winning over
some with gifts,
some with shows of force,
and some with sweet words.

32 What man has greater dharma
than a rājā
who provides livelihood
to the highborn and learned,
whose awe of him
brings contentment to them?

33 "*Tāta!* Revered friend!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"If you know, then tell me:
Who deserves heaven?
What supreme joy
does he experience?
What supreme renown can he expect?"

34 I tell you this simple truth,
(replied Bhīṣma):
The man who most deserves heaven
is he who is able,
even for a second, to console
a terror-stricken supplicant.

35 O finest of the Kauravas!
That is why
you must gladly become
the Kaurava rājā.
Protect the good, kill the wicked,
and win heaven.

36 *Tāta!* Dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
Like creatures from rain-clouds,
like birds from fruiting trees,
let your friends
and all honest people
find in you their support.

37 Men depend upon a king who is dignified,
valiant, aggressive when required,
sympathetic, sense-restrained,
large-hearted, and loving to his subjects.

SECTION SEVENTY-SIX

1 "O Pitāmaha!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Some Brahmins
are engaged in their sva-karma.
Others do work
not befitting their caste.
Why this difference?"

2 O rājā! (replied Bhīṣma)
Brahmins who have
all the signs of deep learning,
and see all life serenely,
are said to be equal
to Brahmā himself.

3 Those who study the Vedas –
Ṛg-Sāma-and-Yajuḥ –
and devote themselves
to their caste duties
are said to be the equals
of the gods, O rājā.

4 And those fallen Brahmins,
O rājā,
who violate the caste duties
ordained
from their day of birth,
are like Śūdras.

5 Those who don't know the *śrutis*
and do not light
the sacred fire of *agnihotṛ*
should be taxed
by a rājā acquainted with dharma,
and forced to work.

6 Brahmins working in law-courts,
as paid temple attendants,
as astrologers, as village priests,
as mahā-*pathika*
long-distance travellers –
are *cāṇḍāla*-outcastes.

7 Brahmins who go to *mleccha* lands
populated
by the wicked and licentious
are also *cāṇḍālas*
and reach the nether regions
after they die.

8 Brahmins who perform yajñas
for vow-breakers,
mlecchas and Śūdras
get ill-fame in this life,
and hell
in the next.

9 Brahmins who traduce the Vedas –
Ṛg-Sāma-and-Yajuḥ–
these fools are doomed
to be born
for an entire *kalpa*
as worms with human faces.

10 Brahmins who officiate
as *ṛtvik*-priests,
purohitas, ministers,
envoys and messengers
are the equal, O rājā,
of Kṣatriyas.

11 Brahmins who ride horses,
elephants, chariots,
and become foot-soldiers,
O rājā,
are said to be the equal
of Vaiśyas.

12 If an earth-lord's exchequer
is not full,
he can tax such Brahmins.
Brahmā-like
and god-like Brahmins
are not taxed.

13 The Vedas declare that a rājā
is the lord
of the wealth of all non-Brahmins.
He is also lord
of the wealth
of all fallen Brahmins.

14 On on account should a rājā
pardon fallen Brahmins.
Indeed, for the sake
of preserving dharma,
he should punish them
and socially segregate them.

15 If a Brahmin is found guilty of theft,
O rājā,
the people of that kingdom
have the right
to hold the rājā responsible
for the crime.

16 Those who are wise in the Vedas
declare that if
a Veda-wise or novitiate Brahmin
steals because of dire distress,
the rājā must assure
a livelihood for him.

17 O foe-crushing Yudhiṣṭhira!
If, despite that,
he continues to steal,
he and his family
must be swiftly banished
from the kingdom.

18 Yajñas, *śruti*, non-malice,
ahiṁsā, pūjā-respect of guests,
self-discipline, truth, tapasyā, generosity –
these make a Brahmin.

SECTION SEVENTY-SEVEN

1 "O bull-brave Bharata Pitāmaha!"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"On whose wealth does a rājā
have authority?
How should he exercise it?
Please tell me."

2 The Vedas declare that a rājā
is the lord (replied Bhīṣma)
of the wealth of all non-Brahmins.
He is also lord
of the wealth
of all fallen Brahmins.

3 On no account should a rājā
pardon fallen Brahmins.
Good and sensible people
are agreed
this is the time-honoured tradition
of a rājā.

4 If a Brahmin is found guilty of theft,
O king,
it follows that the rājā
of that kingdom
must he held responsible
for the misdeed.

5 A rājā takes the blame on himself
if a Brahmin
indulges in improper activities –
which is why
rāja-ṛṣis are so conscientious
in protecting Brahmins.

6 In this connection is a story –
an ancient history –
of what the Kekaya-rājā
said
when he was about to be abducted
by a rākṣasa.

7 It so happened once, O rājā,
the ruler of Kekaya
was in a forest engaged
in strict vows
and sacred studies
when a rākṣasa attacked him.

8 "In my territory," said the rājā,
"is no thief,
no miser, no drunkard,
no yajña-and-*agnihotṛ* non-performer.
How can you hope
to possess me?

9 There is not a single Brahmin
in my kingdom
who is not learned, strict-vowed, soma-drinking,
agnihotṛ-and-yajña-performing –
how can you hope
to possess me?

10 Countless yajñas are performed
in my kingdom
with lavish *dakṣiṇās*,
sacred texts studied
with strict vows –
how can you hope to possess me?

11 Brahmins in my kingdom
study, teach,
perform yajñas,
and officiate at yajñas,
give gifts, and receive gifts –
all these six duties.

12 They are diligent in their duties,
soft-spoken,
truth-speaking, provided for,
and pūjā-respected by me –
how can you hope
to possess me?

13 Never asking, always giving,
dedicated to truth and dharma;
always studying,
never teaching;
performing yajñas,
not officiating at yajñas;

14 Protecting Brahmins,
and never fleeing in battle –
such are the Kṣatriyas
performing the sva-karma
in my kingdom –
how can you hope to possess me?

15 Engaged in agriculture, trade,
cow-rearing
without resorting to māyā-trickery,
always conscientious,
performing sacred rites,
strict-vowed and truth-speaking,

16 Feeding guests first before eating,
self-disciplined,
pure in body and mind,
devoted to their families,
are my Vaiśyas –
how can you hope to possess me?

17 The Śūdras in my kingdom
make their living
by serving the other castes,
performing their sva-karma
with no ill-feeling –
how can you hope to possess me?

18

The needy, the helpless, the old,
the infirm, the ill, and women –
I see to it
that they are all well cared for –
how can you hope
to possess me?

19

As established by tradition,
I respect family dharma,
country dharma and other dharmas,
leaving no scope for fault-finding–
how can you hope
to possess me?

20

I pūjā-respect and respect
and support
all the ascetics
who practise tapasyā
in my kingdom –
how can you hope to possess me?

21

I do not eat
without first feeding others,
I do not sleep
with the wives of others,
I do not play wild games –
how can you hope to possess me?

22

No non-brahmacārī has to beg
in my kingdom,
no *bhikṣu*-mendicant practises brahmacarya;
no non-*ṛtvik* offers libations –
how can you hope
to possess me?

23

I have always ruled
my kingdom
as a responsible ruler
is expected to rule –
how can you hope
to possess me?

24 Never have I slighted
the learned, the old,
the tapasyā-practisers.
When my kingdom sleeps,
I keep awake –
how can you hope to possess me?

25 My motives for my karma
are crystal clear.
I fear no misfortune.
I am a dharma-abiding householder –
how can you hope
to possess me?

26 My purohita is conversant
with all dharmas;
he is an ātma-*jñanī*,
he is wise,
a man of tapasyā,
he is the lord of my kingdom.

27 By charity and gifts,
to acquire learning;
by truth and protecting Brahmins,
to find fulfilment;
by dedicated service to gurus,
to be near them; –
this is what I want.
I have no fear
of rākṣasas.

28 I have no widows
in my kingdom,
no rascally Brahmin
who cheats and steals,
no Brahmin who officiates
at yajñas he should not,
no hardened criminal.
That is why
I have no fear
of rākṣasas.

29 There is no two-fingers'-breadth space
in my body
that is not scarred
with wounds received
in a war of dharma –
how can you hope to possess me?

30 My subjects are always chanting
svasti-benedictions
on cows and Brahmins
and for the glory of the country –
how can you hope
to possess me?"

31 The rākṣasa replied:
"Unchaste women,
unjust kings, misbehaving Brahmins
are the cause of fear
spreading
among people.

32 In such a country,
rains don't fall,
epidemics spread,
hunger stalks people,
and fearful discord
ravages the land.

33 In a land where Brahmins
live in peace
and prosperity,
no one fears
yakṣas, rākṣasas,
piśācas and antigods.

34 O ruler of Kekaya!
You are dedicated
to the pursuit of dharma,
in every respect.
Go home. I spare you.
May you prosper!

35 O king of Kekaya!
A ruler who protects
cows and Brahmins and subjects
does not fear only rākṣasas,
he need not fear Pāvaka,
the god of fire.

36 A king who gives priority
to Brahmins,
whose strength comes from Brahmins,
whose subjects
are always gracious to guests,
will attain heaven."

37 That is why, O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
(continued Bhīṣma)
you should protect Brahmins,
who will protect you.
Their blessings pour
on a rājā of righteousness.

38 It is important for a rājā
to control
aberrant Brahmins,
providing for them, however,
their basic needs
for sustenance.

39 A rājā,
who governs his people
in this way,
gets joy and prosperity
in this life,
and the felicity
of Indra's heaven
in the next.

SECTION SEVENTY-EIGHT

1 "O Bharata descendant!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"You have said a Brahmin
can follow rāja-dharma in crises. Can a Brahmin
follow Vaiśya-dharma to support himself?"

2 In crises, if unable to earn a livelihood
by Kṣatriya-dharma, (replied Bhīṣma)
a Brahmin is free to take up agriculture
and cow-rearing in order to support himself.

3 "In that case, O bull-brave Bharata,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"following Vaiśya-dharma,
what articles
may he sell without losing hope
of gaining heaven?"

4 Yudhiṣṭhira! (replied Bhīṣma)
Wine, salt,
sesame seeds,
all animals with manes,
bulls, honey, meat,
cooked food, -

5 Under no circumstances whatsoever
should a Brahmin
sell any of these.
Dear one! If he does so,
a Brahmin will find himself
in hell itself.

6 Never to be sold also are:
a goat, symbol of Agni;
sheep, of Varuṇa; horse, of Sūrya;
land, of *virāṭ*-sovereign;
and cow, symbol of yajña
and soma-juice.

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7 O descendant of Bharata!
Civilised, good people
do not praise a Brahmin
giving cooked in exchange for uncooked food,
but a Brahmin can take cooked food
in exchange for uncooked.

8 There is no taint of adharma
in saying:
"We will happily eat
cooked food;
in exchange we give you
uncooked food."

9 I will tell you, Yudhiṣṭhira,
of the tradition
that is associated
with this practice –
because that indeed
is Sanātana Dharma.

10 "I give you this.
You give me that."
Both are pleased.
This is dharma.
To take by force
is not.

11 From time immemorial,
this is the way
followed by ṛṣis
and civilised, good men.
No one
has ever questioned this.

12 "*Tāta*! My revered friend!"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Supposing, violating their sva-dharma,
people take up arms,
and the power of the Kṣatriya
is threatened and decreases –

13 How does a rāja go about protecting
his kingdom and people
in such a situation?
O lord of men!
Answer me in detail,
and allay my fears."

14 In such a case (replied Bhīṣma),
the four castes
led by Brahmins, for their good,
should resort to gifts,
self-discipline yajñas, tapasyā,
and hostility-control.

15 Those among them
who possess the strength
provided by study of sacred Vedic texts
should gather behind the rājā,
like the gods
supporting Mahendra-Indra.

16 The prop of a rājā
whose power is threatened
is said to be a Brahmin,
which is why
a wise rājā should turn for help
to a Brahmin.

17 To ensure his kingdom's progress
after winning a victory
on the battlefield,
a rājā should see
that the four castes
pursue their sva-dharmas.

18 If it so happens, Yudhiṣṭhira,
that *dasyu*-robbers
spread ruin and miscegenation,
all the four castes
should take up arms against them.
Nothing wrong in that.

19 "What happens," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"if for some reason
Kṣatriyas start oppressing Brahmins?
Who protects Brahmins then?
What is a Brahmin's dharma then?
What his sure refuge?"

20 In that case (replied Bhīṣma),
by tapasyā, brahmacarya,
weapons, brute force,
with or without māyā-trickery,
the Brahmins should end
the Kṣatriya oppression.

21 If Kṣatriyas start oppressing people,
specially Brahmins,
only Brahmins can put a stop
to their misdeeds,
because the Kṣatriyas
originated from Brahmins.

22 Fire from water,
Kṣatriyas from Brahmins,
iron from stone.
All three with fierce energy,
tranquillised only
by their yoni-origins.

23 When iron strikes stone,
fire fights water,
Kṣatriya clashes with Brahmin –
all three
meet their match:
iron, fire, Kṣatriya.

24 Terrifying and near-invincible
may be the strength of a Kṣatriya,
O Yudhiṣṭhira,
but when it clashes
with the prowess of a Brahmin,
it calms down.

25 When Brahmin-power becomes mild,
when Kṣatriya-valour
becomes spineless,
when all the castes
start misbehaving
with Brahmins,

26 Then all people who,
to save Brahmins,
dharma, and themselves,
risk their lives
by taking up arms
to fight the miscreants –

27 All these stong-willed
and idealistic people
are the well-spoken-of *puṇya*-śloka.
It is right
that all should take up arms
to defend Brahmins.

28 Those heroes who give their lives
to protect Brahmins
attain the supreme fulfilment
reserved for those
who study Vedas, perform yajñas and tapasyā,
and nobly immolate themselves.

29 Nor should a Brahmin be blamed
if he takes up arms
to protect the other castes.
The learned say
no dharma is greater than sacrifice
of one's life like this.

30 Those who sacrifice their lives like this –
I namaskāra them.
May they prosper!
May we find similar fulfilment!
Manu says: "These heroes attain
Brahmā's heavenly realm."

31 Like people cleansed of all blame
after the ritual bath
at the end of an Aśvamedha,
purified of misdeeds
are all who die in battle,
slain by war-weapons.

32 Time and place sometimes
transform adharma
into dharma,
and dharma into adharma.
Such is the power
of time and place.

33 Loving people do heinous deeds
and attain
a supreme heaven.
Men of dharma
behave like criminals
and find supreme fulfilment.

34 Untainted is an arms-wielding Brahmin
in three cases:
in his own self-defence,
to right the wrong-doing
of misbehaving castes,
to punish robbers.

35 "Supposing robbers become audacious,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira,
"and caste-intermixture takes place,
and Kṣatriyas are helpless,
and the other castes
lost in confusion,

36 And, O finest of rājās,
a Brahmin, Vaiśya or Śūdra
emerges to punish
the *dasyu*-robbers,
and protect the afflicted people.
by means of dharma –

37 Would such a man be justified
in his mission,
or should he be discouraged?
It seems to me
that even a non-Kṣatriya
can then bear arms."

38 Let him be Śūdra or whatever
(replied Bhīṣma),
such a man is to be respected.
He is the boat
that saves you from drowning
in a boat-less sea.

39 O rājā! Any person on whom
the distressed and helpless
rely to protect them
from criminals,
and assure their happiness
by giving them security,

40 Must not only be pūjā-respected;
he must be loved
as one does a close relative.
O Kaurava!
Anyone who removes others' fears
must be honoured.

41 What good is a bull
that cannot carry loads?
a cow that won't give milk?
a barren wife?
a rājā who cannot guarantee
law and order?

42 O son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Like a wooden elephant,
a leather deer,
a castrated eunuch,
like a field
that is barren,

43 Is a Brahmin
not learned,
and a rājā
who cannot protect –
as useless
as a rainless cloud.

44 Crown only that person rājā
who knows
how to protect the good
and punish the wicked –
he is worthy
to rule the world.

SECTION SEVENTY-NINE

1 "O finest of eloquent speakers!
Pitāmaha!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"What about *ṛtvik*-priests?
O Indra-among-rājās!
How many kinds are there?
How should they behave?"

2 The *ṛtvijas* are those Brahmins
(replied Bhīṣma)
who are proficient
in *chanda*-chants,
sāma-songs,
and *śruti*-texts.

3 They are totally dedicated, patient,
soft-spoken, always friendly with each other,
and looking on all
with equal affection.

4 Cruel towards none, truth-speaking,
undevious, sincere and simple,
not hostile, or self-important,
modest, self-disciplined, serene –

5 These are the qualities
noticed in a purohita.
Learned, firm in truth,
sense-controlled,
cultivating ahiṁsā towards all,
kāma-and-malice-free,
whose learning, conduct, and family –
these three – are pure,

6 Who is content
with his *ahiṁsā* and his knowledge –
they alone are worthy of Brahmā.
Tāta! Dear one!
These are the *ṛtvijas*
who deserve to be respected.

7 "The Vedas have laid down rules
for *dakṣiṇās*,"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
'Give this! Give this much!'
Surely these are not related
to material giving!

8 These words of the śāstras
do not take into account
āpad-dharma, a crisis-condition.
They are shocking –
for what happens
if one is unable to give *dakṣiṇā*?

9 And yet, Veda-śruti insists
that a man of śraddhā
should perform yajñas.
A poor man's yajña,
despite his śraddhā,
is vitiated without sufficient *dakṣiṇā*."

10 No one ever attains
any kind of mahā-merit
(replied Bhīṣma)
by resorting to deceit
and māyā-trickery.
Never think in those terms.

11 *Tāta*! Dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
Dakṣiṇā is part and parcel of Vedic yajña.
A yajña performed
without *dakṣiṇā*
will not ferry its performer
to fulfilment.

12 A *pūrṇa-patra* cup
of 256 palmfuls of rice
equals the most lavish *dakṣiṇā*.
Tāta! Dear one!
All three castes should dutifully
perform yajñas.

13 The Vedas say soma
is like a rājā to Brahmins,
yet Brahmins wish to sell it at yajñas.
Worthless is all such selling
unless done
for very special reasons.

14 Ṛṣis who are scrupulous followers
of dharma
say that soma-juice
sold at a yajña
contributes to the performance
of more yajñas.

15 Yajña-performer, yajña, soma –
all of them
must be lawful and honest.
A dishonest man
is no use either to himself
or to others.

16 We have heard that śruti
declares clearly
that yajñas performed
by mahātmā Brahmins strenuously,
for material gain,
are not merit-producing.

17 The supreme *śruti* is this:
tapasyā excels yajña.
Let me tell you more
about tapasyā.
O learned Yudhiṣṭhira!
Listen carefully!

18 Tapasyā is not mortification
of the flesh.
The steady in wisdom say
tapasyā means
ahiṁsā, truth-speaking, non-cruelty,
self-control, compassion.

19 Contempt for the Vedas,
flouting the śāstras,
fomenting mischief
and disorder everywhere –
these are the ways
to destroy your ātman.

20 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
For *deva-hotṛ*-priests,
citti-thought is the ladle,
citta-heart the ghee,
and supreme knowledge
the purifier.

21 Crookedness is death,
simplicity
is fulfilment in Brahman.
This is the essence of knowledge.
What is the use
of garrulous word-play?

SECTION EIGHTY

1 "Pitāmaha!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"The smallest task
proves difficult without someone
to help finish it.
How hard then for a rājā
to rule a kingdom!

2 What should be the character
and conduct
of a rājā's minister?
Who should
a rājā trust,
and who not trust?"

3 O rājā! (replied Bhīṣma)
A rāja has four kinds of friends: *sahārtha*-ally,
bhajamān-devoted, *sahaja*-loyal-from birth,
kṛtrima-won-over-by-gifts.

4 There is also a fifth –
a dharmātmā
loyal to only one, never to two;
he takes the side of dharma,
and abides
by dharma.

5 A rājā should never reveal
any plan
that displeases such a person,
because rājās,
to succeed, sometimes need dharma,
and sometimes adharma.

6 Of the four kinds of friends,
the second
and third are to be preferred;
the first and fourth
carefully watched.
All four, however, are suspect.

7 A rājā must never be careless
about keeping an eye
on the doings of his friends.
A rājā careless in this matter
is despised
by his subjects.

8 A wicked man becomes good,
and a good man
becomes hugely wicked.
An enemy
becomes a friend,
a friend turns hostile.

9 The way a man's mind changes –
how can you
ever trust people?
All really important matters
must be kept by the rājā
to himself.

10 Blind absolute trust
is the ruin
of both dharma and *artha.*
On the other hand,
total distrust is worse
than death.

11 To trust totally
is to die prematurely.
It has terrible consequences.
Your life is in the hands
of the person
you trust totally.

12 So the thing to do
is to trust some people,
but to be on your guard.
Tāta! Dear one!
Make this eternal policy
your watchword.

13 “If I die,
he gets all my wealth” –
distrust that beneficiary,
whoever he may be,
because he, say the wise,
is your enemy.

14 If rainwater collects in a field
and threatens
to spill over
and flood another’s field,
you cannot without the owner’s permission
breach the bund.

15 If the owner,
afraid that his field will be flooded,
decides to breach the bund
and flood your field,
then you have every right
to see him as your enemy.

16 The test of a true friend
is this:
he is happy
when you prosper,
and miserable
when you suffer.

17 And if a person feels,
“What will happen to him
when I am not with him,”
he is the friend
you can trust
as you would your own father.

18 When you prosper,
pass on your prosperity
to such a person.
He who tries his best
to help you
when you decline in dharma,

19 And fears for you,
and feels for you,
he is your true friend.
He who wishes you harm
in any way –
he is your enemy.

20 Consider him
as your very own ātman
who is troubled
when you are troubled
and is not jealous
when you prosper.

21 A man with a pleasing complexion,
gentle voice,
competent, not fault-finding,
of high birth,
well-mannered –
make him your chief advisor.

22 Gifted with remarkable intelligence
and sharp memory,
skilled and naturally not given
to harming others,
not unduly roused
by praise or denigration, –

23 Such a person is ideally suited
to be your *ṛtvik*,
ācārya,
and loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend,
and stay in your house,
and receive your pūjā-respect.

24 Only such a person
can be allowed access
to your secret plans
of dharma-and-*artha*;
you can trust him
like a son trusting a father.

25 One man to one task –
not two or three.
Too many officials working
on the same job
never seem to get on
with each other.

26 A person who values achievement,
who keeps
within the limits of respectability,
who does not run down
and is not jealous of the fame
of others,

27 Who does not give up dharma
from kāma,
fear, and greed,
who is professionally excellent –
he is the one ideally suited
to be your chief minister.

28 Noble birth, noble conduct,
never indulging in self-praise,
brave,
ārya-dignified, learned,
discriminating
between duty and non-duty –

29 This is the kind of minister
who should attend
to your affairs of state.
Pūjā-respect him,
all your major plans
will be sucessfully implemented.

30 If people like these
are entrusted
with special responsibilities,
you can rest assured
all your major plans
will be successfully implemented.

31 They are the ones who believe
in healthy competition;
they are the ones who consult
with each other
and devise the best way
to promote progress.

32 Fear your blood-relatives
as you fear death.
Like a petty rājā
unable to bear a mahārāja's prosperity,
a blood-relative is never happy
with another relative's success.

33 O mahā-muscled Yudhiṣṭhira!
Only a blood-relative
delights in the downfall
of a person who
is sincere, gentle,
modest and truthful.

34 But then, neither is he happy
who has no blood-relatives.
No point blaming
blood-relatives.
Those without blood-relatives
are exploited by others.

35 The fact is that blood-relatives
do come to the aid
of an exploited fellow-relative,
because they cannot bear to see
the family name
tarnished by others.

36 They take it as an attack
on their own
dignity and honour.
So, blood-relatives
have their good points
along with their shortcomings.

37 A person not a blood-relative
grants no special favours
and does no special namaskāras.
So it can be said
that blood-relatives have merits
along with defects.

38 So one should pujā-respect
blood-relatives
with sweet words and good deeds.
Please them
the best way you can.
Don't displease them.

39 Don't trust them;
but give the impression
that you are trusting them.
It does not help
to sit in judgement
on their merits and defects.

40 A man who conducts himself
in this way
will soon find his enemies
getting charmed;
not only that,
but actually becoming friendly.

41 Long-lasting fame
is the reward
of the person
who follows this advice
in his dealings
with blood-relatives,
friends and strangers
and all others
who comprise his maṇḍala
of social contacts.

SECTION EIGHTY-ONE

1 “If blood-relatives cannot be won over,”
said Yudhiṣṭhira, “and those
who should be friends become foes,
what should one do to win over the hearts of both?”

2 In this connection is an ancient story
(replied Bhīṣma) cited as an example
of a discourse between Vāsudeva-Krishna
and the celestial ṛṣi Nārada.

3 Vāsudeva-Krishna once said,
“Never, Nārada,
should one blurt out one’s secrets
to a friend,
whether learned or foolish,
or impulsive.

4 You are my friend, Nārada,
you travel freely in heaven,
so I tell you this.
Question or request a person
only if he’s gifted
with brilliant will-power.

5 I have no desire to enslave
my relatives
with flattering speeches
on how important they are.
I speak out half my mind.
I overlook their words.

6 Like an *araṇi* sacred fire-stick,
O deva-ṛṣi Nārada,
used as a drill to light a fire,
the bitter words
used by my relatives
stir fire in my heart.

7 Saṁkarṣaṇa-Balarāma
flaunts his physical strength,
my younger brother Gada
his sweet gentleness,
my son Pradyumna his good looks.
I'm helpless, Nārada!

8 And among the Andhakas
and the Vṛṣṇis
are scores of mahā-fortune-favoured,
supremely powerful,
hugely energetic
and enterprising kinsmen.

9 The Āhukas and Akrūras quarrel
among themselves,
but spell disaster for those
against whom they combine,
and no trouble at all for those
whom they favour.

10 Doom for the relatives
whom they are against,
prosperity for those
whom they like.
I stay away
from their likes and dislikes.

11 O mahā-minded Nārada!
I am like
a mother of two gamblers:
I want one side to win,
I do not want
the other to lose.

12 And the result, Nārada,
is that I am
at the receiving end of both.
Tell me:
what should I do that's good for me
and also good for them?"

13 "O Krishna of the Vṛṣṇis!"
replied Nārada.
"Calamities are of two kinds:
internal and external –
those of your own making,
and those thrust on you.

14 The trouble you are facing
from the Akrūras and Bhojas
is of your making
After all,
all the people you have named
are your relatives.

15 For whatever reason,
either because you wanted to,
or because they said ugly things about you,
the wealth you obtained
you gave away
to another.

16 O eager-to-help Krishna!
That is the root cause of the trouble.
You cannot now
take it back.
You cannot swallow back
your own vomit.

17 The kingdom cannot be taken back
from Babhru-Akrūra and Ugrasena,
specially by you,
O Krishna,
because that will create rifts
within your family.

18 Say you do succeed
in getting back the kingdom
after fearfully strenuous effort –
but in the process
many lives will be lost
after much devastation.

19 So why not use a weapon
not made of iron,
a gentle but heart-piercing weapon
and with it
wash clean the bitter tongues
of your relatives?"

20 "O muni!" said Vāsudeva-Krishna.
"What is this weapon,
not made of iron,
this gentle weapon
that will wash clean
the bitter tongues of relatives?"

21 "Giving food as much as one can,"
replied Nārada,
"endurance, simplicity, gentleness,
giving pūjā-respect where it is due –
this is the weapon
not made of iron.

22 When a blood-relative
speaks bitter slander
about you,
soften his mind,
his heart and his tongue
with gentle speech.

23 Only a truly great man,
a mahā-puruṣa,
who has a disciplined mind
and noble supporters,
can bear such a heavy burden.
You have that power.

24 Any ox can carry a load
on level land.
It takes a very strong ox
to carry loads
on uneven stretches
where the going is rough.

25 O Keśava-Krishna!
You are the chief
of the Yadava clan.
You must take steps
to prevent the self-ruin
of your people.

26 People will never follow
a leader
who does not have intelligence,
patience, restraint of the senses,
and does not
shun wealth.

27 It is always commendable,
O Krishna,
to desire prosperity,
fame and long life
for one's relatives.
Act accordingly.

28 O *prabhu*-lord Krishna!
You know the six guṇas –
peace, discord, march, halt,
diplomacy, allies –
needed in a progressive king.
Nothing is hidden from you.

29 O mahā-muscled one!
All the Kukura,
Bhoja, Andhaka and Vṛṣṇi Yādavas
love you.
So do others,
including many lords-of-the-earth.

30 O Mādhava-Krishna!
Wise ṛṣis respect you.
You are the guru of all.
You have insight
into past, present, and future.
You are the joy of the Yādavas."

SECTION EIGHTY-TWO

1 O descendant of Bharata!
(continued Bhīṣma)
This is the first part of my discourse.
Listen now to the second.
Anyone promoting a rājā's interests
must be cherished.

2 Say a rājā's exchequer is embezzled
by the minister in charge,
and an official, or any other person,
informs the rājā of the malpractice –

3 The rājā should grant him
private audience,
O Bharata descendant Yudhiṣṭhira,
and protect him,
because corrupt ministers
seek to kill such informers.

4 Would-be thieves of the treasury
always join hands
against those in charge of it,
and royal protection
is the only way to save the officials
from ruin and death.

5 In this connection is cited
an ancient story
as an example to learn from,
about the advice
given by the muni Kālakavṛkṣīya
to the king of Kosala.

6 What I have heard is that
muni Kālakavṛkṣīya
happened to visit
the kingdom of Kosala
when its rājā Kṣemadarśin
had just ascended the throne.

7 Carrying a crow in a cage,
he travelled
the length and breadth
of the kingdom
to gather information
about its administration.

8 Wherever he went, he said,
"Learn crow-talk.
Because I know crow-talk,
crows tell me
all about the past, present,
and future."

9 Proclaiming this everywhere,
accompanied by crowds of followers,
he moved about,
with a keen eye
observing the doings
of the rājā's officers.

10 He got to know their doings
well enough,
and how all the officers
in the kingdom
were busily stealing the wealth
of the rājā.

11 Armed with that information,
carrying the crow,
announcing, "I know everything,"
the strict-vowed muni
expressed his desire
to meet the rājā.

12 Before meeting the rājā,
he said to the lavishly
dressed-and-decorated minister,
"My crow has told me
what you have been up to
in different places.

13 There are others also who know
about your misdeeds,
your plundering of the treasury.
My crow has told me.
The sooner you confess,
the better."

14 To others too, guilty of stealing,
he said:
"You are looting the treasury.
This crow of mine –
never has he said a lie –
let me warn you!"

15 O enhancer of Kaurava glory!
Thus accused,
the rājā's officers got together
and, at night,
while the muni was sleeping,
they killed the crow.

16 Seeing his crow lying dead,
pierced by an arrow,
that very morning
the Brahmin rushed
to Kṣemadarśin
and said:

17 "You are the *īśvara*-lord
of life and wealth, O rājā.
Relieve me
of my fears.
Allow me to speak
for your welfare.

18 You are my friend.
I am your *bhakta.*
My ātman is all yours.
What I did, I did boldly
for your good –
and for doing that, I suffer!

19 Like a well-meaning charioteer
urging a fine horse,
if a person wishes to warn
a friend against danger,
and in the process of wishing well
gets recklessly excited –

20 Then that friend,
if he really wants his own prosperity,
should pardon the recklessness
of his well-wisher,
and listen attentively
to what he has to say."

21 The rājā replied:
"Why will I not listen
to what is said for my good?
Tell me
whatever you like –
I pardon you in advance.

22 Say what you like, Brahmin.
I promise you this :
whatever you say,
Whatever you advise,
I will see
that it is carried out."

23 "I have come to you,"
said the muni,
"with bhakti,
to inform you of the misdeeds
of your officers,
and the dangers that you face.

24 The *ācāryas* have explained
the problems
of those who serve a king.
It's a curse –
only those who cannot serve others,
serve a rājā.

25 They say that those who associate
with a rājā
must know how to deal
with venomous snakes,
because a rājā has many friends
and many enemies.

26 If you depend for your livelihood
upon a rājā,
they are the ones
you will have to fear.
Besides, O rājā, you have to fear
the rājā as well.

27 Carelessness is out of the question
if you are serving
an earth-lord;
and if you wish your welfare,
you must never on any account
neglect your duty.

28 Carelessness will stir the wrath
of a rājā,
a wrath that can ruin you.
Approach a rājā
with as much caution
as you would a blazing fire.

29 An *īśvara*-lord of life and wealth,
an infuriated rājā
is like a venomous serpent.
Consider yourself as no one,
as one who is lifeless,
when facing a rājā.

30 Take care! No disrespectful words
or deeds
before a rājā,
no lounging, no relaxing,
no impolite gestures
of any kind.

31 Please a rājā,
and he becomes a god
who grants the least wish of your heart.
Displease him,
and with his anger
he consumers your very roots.

32 These were the very words
of Yama, O rājā,
and every word is true.
I proceed now
to tell you
what is for your good.

33 Consider me like a minister
who intelligently
advises you for your welfare.
This crow of mine, O rājā,
assisted me in this.
But he has been killed.

34 I do not blame you for this,
nor indeed those
who are close and dear to you.
All I say is:
See for yourself. Help yourself.
Don't swallow the words of others.

35 They live in your house,
they loot your treasury,
they are not interested
in the good of your subjects.
They have become
hostile towards me.

36 They have conspired with others
in the palace
to do this heinous deed,
no doubt, O rājā,
with the intention
of usurping your kingdom.

37 I fear them, O rājā,
and I will return
to my āshram. *Prabhu*-lord!
The arrow
was meant for me,
but it killed my crow.

38 I came here with no ulterior motives,
but these conspirators
despatched my crow to Yama's realm.
It is my tapasyā, O rājā,
that has revealed
all this to me.

39 A kingdom is like a river
infested with sharks
and crocodiles
and voracious *timiṅgila*-whales,
a river I managed to navigate
with the help of my crow.

40 I have succeeded in surviving
in your kingdom
which is like a Himālayan range
infested with lions and tigers,
with boulders and thorns
and other obstacles.

41 A burning flame will see you
through pitch darkness,
a boat will ferry you
across a turbulent river,
but even a paṇḍit cannot overcome
royal intrigues.

42 Your kingdom is a hotbed
of impenetrable gloom.
Absolute darkness.
You yourself are not safe
in it.
What safety have I?

43 No one is safe here,
no one secure.
Believe me, you may be good,
you may be bad –
either way, in this kingdom
you are doomed.

44 Justice says: Punish the wicked,
never the good.
Anyone with even
a little commonsense
will leave this kingdom
as soon as he can.

45 There is a river called Sītā,
O rājā,
infamous because boats sink in it.
Your kingdom,
if you ask me,
is like that all-engulfing river.

46 You are the high honey-gatherer
poised to fall,
you are like poisoned food.
You look to me
more like a wicked man
than a good,

47 Like a pit swarming
with venomous snakes.
O lord of the earth!
Choked with thorny weeds
and *karira*-bamboo shoots,
difficult to navigate –

48 That is the sweet-water river
you are, O rājā!
You are a royal *haṁsa*-swan
surrounded by
hordes of dogs,
jackals and vultures.

49 Creepers twine like parasites
around a mahā-tree,
and flourish luxuriantly;
they hug the tree hard,
till only they are seen,
and not the tree.

50 Then, in a dry hot summer,
a forest-fire
consumes both creepers and tree.
Your ministers, O rājā,
are like those creepers.
Get rid of them.

51 You made them ministers,
O rājā,
they prospered under you.
Now they conspire
against you,
and plot your downfall.

52 Because I suspected your officers
of misdemeanours
and wanted to test them,
very cautiously,
like a man living near a snake,
like the lover of a hero's wife,

53 I stayed in your place
to keep an eye on them.
'Is the rājā
of this kingdom sense-disciplined?
Are his close officers
under his control?

54 Do the people of this kingdom
love their rājā?
Does the rājā love his people?'
Of finest of rājās!
These were the questions worrying me
when I came here.

55 Seeing you, O rājā,
has given me the same joy
that food gives to a starving man.
Seeing your ministers,
gives the same feeling water gives
when one is not thirsty.

56 I wish you well –
that fault is what your ministers
have found in me.
So they hate me.
For no other fault.
I am speaking the truth.

57 I do not hate them.
They are the ones
who nourish dislike for me.
Fear a snake you tread upon.
Fear an enemy
who is wicked-hearted."

58 "O finest of Brahmins!"
said the rājā.
"I welcome and I offer you
my pūjā-respect.
Stay in my palace
for as long as you like.

59 Those who don't want you here
will be the ones
asked to leave here, O Brahmin.
You are free to decide
what steps should be taken
against the guilty.

60 *Bhagavan*! Revered one!
See that the rod
of punishment
falls justly on their heads.
Reflect well, and guide me
to deserved prosperity."

61 The muni replied: "O rājā!
For the time being,
forget the killing of the crow.
Prove the crime,
and punish, one by one,
every guilty minister.

62 O rājā! Charged with the same crime,
the guilty join hands,
and try to reduce the thorny impact
of the conviction
by collectively softening
individual responsibility.

63 We are Brahmins, after all.
Even our punishment
is meted out gently.
We are kind –
we seek your good,
and the good of others.

64 Let me now tell you who I am,
O rājā.
I am the muni
named Kālakavṛkṣīya.
I am your *sambandhī* –
I am close to you.

65 I am a bonded-in-truth
loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend
of your father.
After his death, O rājā,
when the kingdom
was in dire straits,

66 I gave up all other duties,
and concentrated on tapasyā
to bring back
the lost glory.
I love you, and do not want you
to be deceived.

67 You have been through both
good times and bad.
The kingdom is yours.
Why are you so careless
as to leave it
in the hands of ministers?"

68 With the return of the bull-brave
Brahmin Kālakavṛkṣīya,
born in a *purohita*-family,
nāndī-benedictions
and other chants began blessing
the rājā's family.

69 And the muni Kālakavṛkṣīya
made the illustrious rājā of Kosala
the single-umbrella
sole ruler of the world,
and performed
many yajñas for him.

70 O descendant of Bharata!
The Kosala rājā
diligently followed the advice
of his *purohita*,
and established his sovereignty
over the earth.

SECTION EIGHTY-THREE

1 "O lord of the world!" said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Pitāmaha! What should they be like –
a rājā's sabhā-members, helpers, friends,
army generals, and ministers?"

2 Sabhā-members (replied Bhīṣma)
should be modest, self-controlled, sincere,
and have the ability and śakti
to speak convincingly when required.

3 O Kaunteya Yudhiṣṭhira!
As for advisers,
only the very brave,
or learned Brahmins,
the self-possessed and contented,
the mahā-enterprising,

4 Should be the ones to help you
in difficult times,
O descendant of Bharata.
The highborn,
worthy of pūjā-respect,
who has proved his potential,

5 Who remains loyal
in royal pleasure or displeasure,
in adversity and prosperity,
a faithful follower
in all circumstances,
should be a rājā's friend.

6 Generals and army officers
should be highborn citizens by birth,
intelligent,
well educated, fearless,
and absolutely devoted
to you.

7 *Tāta!* Dear Yudhiṣṭhira!
The ignoble-born,
greedy, cruel and shameless
will serve you
only till such time as their palms
are well greased.

8 The highborn, the good-natured,
the skilful interpreters of body language,
the uncruel,
the advantage-takers of time and place,
the seekers
of their employers' welfare –

9 A rājā should appoint
only such people
as his ministers, always.
Those whom you hold dear,
with wealth, honours,
arghya-respect

10 And other rewards
should be given a share
in your prosperity and happiness.
The stable, learned,
honest, stict-vowed and truthful
will never desert you.

11 Be very careful
of the unāryan-misbehaving,
the ill-minded
who forget to keep their promises
again and again,
as a matter of habit.

12 Between one and many,
choose the many, leave the one.
But if that one
excels the many in talent,
choose him
and leave the many.

13 Excellence is easily recognised:
You see it
in valour, in work done
to attain fame,
in word given
and well kept,

14 In honour shown to those
who deserve honour,
in not competing with those
who don't deserve competing with,
in never losing dharma to kāma,
fear, anger and greed,

15 In lack of self-importance,
in truth-speaking,
in ātman-control,
strong sense of personal dignity,
and competence shown
in difficult situations.

16 Son of Pṛthā-Kuntī!
Excellence is revealed
in noble birth, noble connections,
fortitude, skill,
ātman-strength, bravery, gratitude,
and truthfulness.

17 Even enemies will try
to become friends
with a person who possesses
these qualities,
because they are impressed
and charmed by them.

18 An ātman-disciplined earth-ruler,
with practical wisdom,
who seeks to prosper,
should select ministers
after carefully examining
their merits and defects.

19 One who has relatives and friends,
who is highborn,
has proved to be trustworthy,
is a citizen by birth,
bribe-immune, free from sex-scandal,
cleared by investigation,

20 Is well-settled in marriage,
knows the *śrutis*,
comes from a family tradition
of dependable administrators,
and is self-effacing – should be selected
by a progress-seeking king.

21 Intelligent yet modest,
charming with unself-conscious grace,
vigorously enterprising, patient,
able to absorb suffering,
clean-intentioned, affectionate,
steady in decision-making,

22 Who has been tested and found
bold and inflexible and honest
in discharging his duty –
a rājā should appoint
five such individuals
as his finance ministers.

23 Effectively eloquent, brave,
quick at grasping
the heart of any matter,
highborn, idealistic,
good at catching hints,
not hard-hearted,

24 Knowing the time-and-place context
of every problem,
desiring his master's welfare –
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira,
only such persons are worthy
of being ministers.

25 A ruler with a minister
lacking dynamic vision
will always be at a loss.
Such a minister
will only succeed in spawning
one problem after another.

26 No matter how highborn he is,
no matter how concerned
with matters of dharma-artha-kāma,
if a minister
lacks *śruti*-learning,
he will fail in making right decisions.

27 Similarly, a person of low birth,
no matter how learned in the *śrutis*
he may be,
like a leaderless soldier,
like a blind man,
he will bungle and stumble in all he does.

28 And a person who vacillates,
and cannot make up his mind –
no matter how intelligent,
capable and well-versed in the sacred texts –
he will never succeed
in long-term goals.

29 A wicked-minded man
totally devoid of learning
and *śruti*-wisdom,
can go ahead with gigantic plans,
but he lacks the long vision
and he will fail.

30 On no account should a king
trust a minister
who is not lovingly loyal;
on no account
must he be given access
to royal secrets.

31 An untrustworthy minister like that
will conspire
with other ministers and ruin the rājā,
like wind-fanned fire
ravaging a tree
through hollows in its trunk.

32 A master, in a fit of anger,
can dismiss a servant,
or reprimand him,
and reinstate him the next day,
substituting
displeasure with approval.

33

A loving loyal servant
will shake off
such anger and insult,
but the wrath
of an unloving minister
is worse than a thunderbolt.

34

Loving loyalty means enduring
any and everything
for the good of the master,
making his joy and sorrow your own.
Only such a person's counsel
should be taken.

35

Lovingly loyal he may be,
full of guṇas,
very learned he may be,
but if the person is not straight,
he should never be consulted
by a rājā.

36

Nor should that person
be ever consulted by a rājā,
who is friendly
with the enemies of the kingdom,
and does not respect
his own people.

37

Not to be consulted
is the minister unlearned,
impure, haughty,
friendly with one's enemies,
boastful, self-absorbed, greedy,
and hot-headed.

38

Not to be consulted either
is the minister
who is new to his office,
no matter how loyal,
or how deeply learned,
or strongly recommended.

39 Not to be consulted
is the son whose father
was dismissed from service
for going against dharma,
even if the son has somehow
found favour in the court.

40 Not to be consulted
is the man whose property
has been confiscated,
even for a negligible offence,
no matter how full
of guṇas and goodwill he be.

41 Trust and consult the man
who is native-born,
who is a clear thinker,
learned, far-sighted,
versatile, accomplished,
practical, pure-hearted.

42 Trust and consult the man
who knows *jñāna* and *vijñāna*,
combining learning and commonsense,
can tell friend from foe,
and is as friends with the king
as with his own ātman.

43 Truth-speaking, noble-minded,
serious, self-effacing, soft-spoken,
whose family
has a tradition
of loyalty to the king –
trust such a person.

44 Content with what he has,
respected by truth-speakers,
courageous, free from malice,
having knowledge of policy-making,
aware of the demands of time –
trust such a person.

45 A king who wishes to rule
with the power to punish
should reveal his plans
only to that person
who can firmly persuade
and convince others.

46 Only that person is entitled
to the trust of the king
who is himself trusted by citizens
for his dharma,
who is brave and courageous
and has insight into policy.

47 Let a king have at least
three such ministers –
who have all the guṇas,
who deserve pūjā-respect,
who, knowing what is what,
seek mahā-greatness.

48 A minister should note well
the weak points of his king
and of the king's enemies.
The prosperity of a kingdom
is rooted in the counsel
of responsible ministers.

49 A king should see to it
that his weaknesses
are never seen by his enemies.
Like a tortoise its limbs,
a king should conceal his defects
from his enemies.

50 Those ministers are wise
who conceal royal policy.
A rājā's armour
is his policy;
his subjects are instruments
of that policy.

51 The root of a kingdom
is espionage;
the sap of this tree
is royal policy,
which is also the life-support
of ministers and others.

52 A king should trust ministers
who have overcome pride and anger,
self-praise and jealousy,
and passed the five tests:
physical, verbal, psychological,
deed-implementation, and suspicion.

53 A king must first understand
the thought-processes
of his three trusted ministers,
and confide in them
only after he has come
to a final conclusion.

54 On fundamental matters
a king should consult
a Brahmin guru well-versed
in dharma, artha, and kāma.
Once his advice is given,
and the king's mind is made up,
let the king not hesitate –
let him implement the advice,
and make it his sound policy.

55 Those who know about policy
and how policy is made
say this is the best way.
A king should always keep
the welfare of his subjects
as his main goal,
and the finest means
to achieve that goal
is policy made in this way.

56 In such secret consultations,
nowhere near them,
neither behind, in front,
above, or below,
should there be people
who are suspect –
such as dwarfs, hunchbacks,
feeble, lame, blind,
dumb, women, and eunuchs.

57 So let the king go
to the palace roof
open to the sky,
or a large open area
lush with *kuśa*-grass;
there should he sit,
and hold secret consultation,
with faultless articulation
and proper body-language.

SECTION EIGHTY-FOUR

1 There is a story about this
(continued Bhīṣma),
an ancient conversation, Yudhiṣṭhira,
between Bṛhaspati and Śakra-Indra.

2 "Tell me, Brahmin," asked Śakra-Indra,
"one single step
that a person should take
to obtain fame
and become the ideal model
for the whole world."

3 "Śakra-Indra," replied Bṛhaspati,
"sweet and gentle speech
is the one single step
by which a person can attain fame
and become the ideal model
for the whole world.

4 By that one step, O Śakra-Indra,
he brings happiness
to the entire world.
Behaving thus is enough
to make him dearly loved
by one and all.

5 Sweet and gentle speech
is not possible for one
who never says anything,
who is always frowning,
and dislikes people
for one reason or other.

6 People like the man
who recognises their presence
and speaks to them first –
but not only that –
who speaks to them
with a smiling face.

7 Tasteless is food
without salt and spice.
A gift that is given
without sweet words
is never appreciated
by its recipient.

8 And remember, Śakra-Indra,
even if a person
gives nothing but sweet words,
he will succeed
in impressing
everyone he meets.

9 So if you want to rule
and wield the rod,
cultivate sweet speech.
It works wonders,
it is eminently fruitful,
it silences opposition.

10 Nothing in this world
works so well,
if properly employed,
as sweet speech
when it comes to influencing
and winning over others."

11 Son of Kuntī (ended Bhīṣma),
Śakra-Indra acted
on his *purohita's* wise advice.
You should do the same.

SECTION EIGHTY-FIVE

1 "O Indra-among-rājās!"
enquired Yudhiṣṭhira.
"How does a dharma-abiding king
gain fame for ever and ever
from his subjects
whom he rules and protects?"

2 A king (replied Bhīṣma)
who rules with a pure heart,
with transparent authority,
acquires dharma and fame
in both the worlds –
in this life and the next.

3 "O mahā-wise one!"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Explain to me clearly
how should a king behave
with his subjects –
for they are all so different?

4 It seems to me
that no single human being
can possess all the guṇas
which you have described
as essential
for the administration of justice."

5 O mahā-wise one! (said Bhīṣma)
You are indeed learned.
What you say is right.
For all these guṇas
to exist in a single individual
is next to impossible.

6 And since it is so difficult,
let me explain quickly
how one should go about
selecting such ministers
in whom such qualities
are required.

7 Four Brahmins, all fearless,
learned in the Vedas,
all *snātaka* and pure-minded;
eight Kṣatriyas,
strong-limbed,
and expert in the use of weapons;

8 Twentyone Vaiśyas,
all of them affluent;
three meek Śūdras,
all of them dedicated
to the principle
of selfless service;

9 One *sūta*-bard skilled
in the lore of the Purāṇas
and possessing
all the eight guṇas,
around fifty years old,
fearless, and unenvious,

10 Wise in the ways
of *śruti* and *smṛti*-wisdom,
self-effacing and impartial,
expert in discussion and debate,
incorruptible to seductions
of greed and wealth,

11 Free from the clutches
of the seven gruesome vices . . .
A rājā should select from these
an assembly of eight,
and sitting with them
he should govern his subjects.

12 Together let them decide
what is good for the kingdom.
Let all their decisions
be announced to the public.
This is the way a rājā
should behave with his people.

13 A king cannot secretly confiscate
or appropriate wealth
that belongs to any subject.
This is an act of adharma
which will forever
haunt him and his ministers.

14 The people of his kingdom
will flee from him
like sparrows from a hawk.
They will drift away,
like a rudderless boat
on a stormy sea.

15 Fear haunts the heart of a ruler
who governs
his people with adharma.
In the next world too
such a ruler
will find no entry in heaven.

16 O bull-brave hero!
Since dharma is the root
of all governance,
anyone who occupies a dharma-seat –
be it the rājā's ministers,
or be it his own son –

17 Should they fail to discharge dharma
in their positions of official power,
not only
do they destroy themselves,
they bring about the downfall
of the king as well.

18 When the helpless and vulnerable
are abused and exploited
by those who have authority,
who can they turn to
except the king
for help in their distress?

19 Oral accusations are undependable;
a witness is essential
to settle a confusion dispute.
In case a witness is unavailable,
royal intervention
becomes unavoidable.

20 Punishment must be appropriate.
The guilty rich
must be fined,
their wealth confiscated;
the guilty poor,
sentenced to imprisonment.

21 The king should punish
the grossly characterless
with physical force;
the educated criminal
should be corrected gently,
with psychological persuasion.

22 An exemplary dramatic execution
must be the sentence
of one planning a rājā's assassination,
committing arson and theft,
or fomenting caste hatred
and caste intermixture.

23 O lord of the world!
No adharma attaches
to the king who punishes rightly;
on the contrary,
such a king is blessed
with everlasting dharma.

24 But the king who punishes
out of kāma-caprice
becomes not only infamous
in this life,
he goes to hell
after death.

25 On no account should a person
get punished
for another person's crime.
Respect the law,
and convict or acquit
as decided by law.

26 An envoy cannot be killed
under any circumstances.
A king guilty of killing
a messenger
goes to hell,
along with his ministers.

27 A Kṣatriya-dharma-following king
who kills a messenger
who faithfully conveys a report
stains his *pitṛ*-ancestors
with the crime
of killing a foetus.

28 Look for these seven guṇas
in a king's messenger:
noble birth, respectable character,
eloquence, intelligence,
pleasing voice, accurate reporting,
and impeccable memory.

29 The same qualities are required
in his doorkeepers
and personal guards.
His closest bodyguard
must also possess
the same guṇas.

30 He who is thoroughly learned
in the dharma-śāstras,
who knows about waging war
and making peace,
who is intelligent, patient, modest,
who can keep a secret,

31 Of noble birth, courageous,
clear-minded –
a king's minister should be one such;
indeed,
these guṇas should also adorn
the general of his army,

32 Who should also be expert
in battle-formations,
war-weapons, and soldier-psychology;
able also to endure
rain, cold, heat, and wind;
and know his enemy's weaknesses.

33 A king must make others
trust him,
but he must trust no one;
O Indra-among-rājās,
it is not advisable
that he trust even his own son.

34 O defectless one!
I have told you the truths
as laid down in the śāstras.
The profoundest secret of kingship
is that a king
should trust no one.

SECTION EIGHTY-SIX

1 “Tell me, Pitāmaha,” asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
“should a rājā live
in an existing city,
or should he order a new capital built?”

2 O Bharata descendant! (replied Bhīṣma)
Son of Kuntī! First he should check
the security of the city where he lives
with his sons, relatives, and friends.

3 So let me first explain all
about a city’s fortifications.
Listen to me carefully,
and then decide
what has to be done,
and follow it through.

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4 Let him keep in mind
the six kinds of forts,
and then build a city
in an area
bountifully supplied by nature,
conducive to everyone’s prosperity.

5 The six kinds of forts are:
desert forts,
flat and open land forts,
mountain forts,
heavily manned forts, water forts,
and forest forts.

6 A city that has forts
fully equipped
with provisions and war-weapons,
well walled and excellently moated,
well guarded with elephants,
horses and chariots,

7 Inhabited by scholars and craftsmen,
with a plentiful supply
of the necessities of life,
whose inhabitants
abide by dharma,
and are skilful and hardworking,

8 Populated by healthy humans
and elephants and horses,
with bustling squares and shops;
with a reputation
for law and order,
where fear is absent, and peace prevails,

9 Which is always well lit,
brimming with activity,
replete with excellent buildings
of the brave and the rich,
echoing with the melody
of Vedic Brahman-chants,

10 A city of fairs and festivals,
a city where the gods
are accorded pūjā-reverence –
that is the city
for a rājā to live,
with all his loyal ministers and soldiers.

11 Let him dwell in such a city,
and augment his treasury,
his army, his allies,
and improve his system of justice.
Let him weed out malpractices
in the city and the villages.

12 Let him specially augment
the food stocks
and the armoury of war-weapons.
Special attention
must be given to improving goods
and mechanical devices.

13 Fuel, iron, grain-chaff,
charcoal, timber,
horns, bamboo, bones,
marrow, oil,
lard and honey,
medicinal herbs,

14 Flax, resin *sarja-rāsa*,
rice, weapons,
arrows, leather, ropes,
vetra-cane rods,
muñja and *balbaja* grasses
for string-making . . .

15 A rājā must see to it
that water-bodies
such as tanks and wells
and large reservoirs
and trees abundant with juice
are well guarded.

16 Always to be deeply respected
are ācāryas,
ṛtvik-priests, *purohitas*,
mahā-bowmen,
year-forecasting astrologers,
and physicians.

17 He should see to it
that all who are wise,
and intelligent, and disciplined,
hardworking, brave,
of noble birth and good character,
are always suitably employed.

18 A rājā must ensure pūjā-respect
for those who abide by dharma,
and he must punish those
who indulge in adharma.
He must ensure that all castes
practise their sva-karma.

19 And he should make plans
for city and village
only after receiving reports
from his spies
about what is happening there
openly and secretly.

20 Since everything depends on this,
it is the rājā's duty
to personally judge and punish
the activities of spies,
of policy-making, and the treasury,
specially the treasury.

21 Spies in city and village
are a king's eyes,
helping him to observe
the goings-on
of his enemies and friends
and neutrals.

22 So he should take steps
to reward loyal *bhaktas*
and punish his adversaries,
doing everything
required of him,
considering nothing as too trivial.

23 He should perform yajñas,
and give in charity
such that it pains no one.
Dharma is violated
if a king fails to do his duty
as protector.

24 He must make arrangements
for the needy,
the poverty-stricken,
the elderly,
and for widows as well,
and young girls.

25 At regular intervals,
a rājā should provide
cloth material, intensils and food
to āśramas.
This must be done graciously,
without show of self-importance.

26 He should humbly stand
before a man of tapasyā;
he should bare his ātman
before such a man,
as well as his plans
and governing policy.

27 Pūjā-respect must be accorded
by a rājā
to a person of noble birth
and profound learning,
and gifts given to him of seats,
couches and food.

28 Even in the worst crisis,
a rājā must trust
a man of tapasyā.
Even hardened thieves
place their trust
in a man of tapasyā.

29 Let him place his wealth
in that man's trust,
and receive in return
his wise counsel.
But never excessive trust,
and never excessive honour.

30 A king should appoint
one such man of tapasyā
in his own kingdom,
one in another's kingdom,
one in the forest-regions,
and others in vassal-territories.

31 He should be generous with them,
and honour them,
and reward them –
those in his own kingdom,
and those in forest-regions
and in others' kingdoms.

32 The fact of the matter is:
those men of tapasyā
who are strict-vowed ascetics
will readily give shelter
to the rājā
when he needs refuge.

33 This, briefly, should give you
an idea of the city
a rājā should choose
as the royal residence.

SECTION EIGHTY-SIX

1 "O bull-brave Bharata rājā!"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira.
"How should a kingdom be defended,
how developed?
This is what I would like
to know from you."

2 Listen then (replied Bhīṣma).
Listen with concentration
to how a kingdom can be defended
and how developed,
as I give you
all the details.

3 Appoint one supervisor
for one village,
another for every ten villages,
another for twenty,
another for every hundred villages,
another for a thousand.

4 The one-village supervisor reports
to the ten-village supervisor
whatever problems he faces.
The ten-village supervisor
reports his problems
to his twenty-village superior.

5 The twenty-village officer reports
to the person in charge
of a hundred villages,
bringing faithfully
to his attention important matters
pertaining to these villages.

6 The village supervisor is entitled
to the surplus of his village.
He contributes also
to the ten-village supervisor,
who in turn contributes
to his twenty-village superior.

7 O finest of the Bharatas!
The hundred-village lord
is a highly respected official,
and deserves
the material benefits
of a prosperous village-group.

8 O Bharata descendant!
A rājā has many such
village-groups in his control.
A thousand-village supervisor
is entitled to the benefits
of an entire town-segment.

9 These material benefits enjoyed
by him will come
in the form of grain and gold.
Preparations for war,
and internal village matters,
are all in his hands.

10 The officer given such charge
should be a man of dharma,
to whom indolence is alien.
Every town in the kingdom
must have such a competent
and practical administrator.

11 He is the fearful shape
keeping watch
on all subordinate officers,
like a planet high up
that hovers over other planets
ominously in the sky.

12 It is essential that a spy
should move about
everywhere in the kingdom
Mischief-mongers,
rogues and murderers
need to be constantly watched,

13 And the people of the land
must be protected
at all times from such elements.
Sales and purchases,
private land, food, servants,
workers' salaries –

14 All trade transactions –
must be inspected,
and taxes levied on them.
Whatever is produced by craftsmen,
and sold,
must be checked

15 Carefully, and taxes imposed
on arts and crafts.
It is clear, Yudhiṣṭhira,
that such taxes
can be high or low,
but a mahārāja

16 Should see to it that taxes
do not become a burden
on his subjects.
The amount of tax must correspond
to the quality of the work,
and the profit.

17 Never must the tax imposed
alienate the worker
from the fruits of his labour.
Both rājā and worker
must benefit from the tax –
they are co-sharers.

18 That is why imposing a tax
is a matter
that needs careful consideration.
Thirsting for more
will uproot the king
along with his subjects.

19 He should close the door
of his greed
if he wishes to be popular.
A rājā who overreaches
will succeed only in gaining
dislike and disfavour.

20 How can a person
who is disliked
find true success?
A clear-thinking king
should remember the calf example
before milking his kingdom.

21 Allow the calf to suck –
it will grow up strong
and carry very heavy loads.
O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira!
If you milk the cow too vigorously,
you will render her useless.

22 No mahā-progress is possible
if you milk
a kingdom excessively.
On the other hand,
if a king restrains himself,
and cherishes his kingdom,

23 Mahā-fruitful wealth
comes to him,
and he truly prospers.
What he should do
is store that wealth
for use in crisis and emergency.

24 He realises
his treasury is his kingdom,
his kingdom is his home.
Let him be gracious
to all in city or countryside
who seek his shelter.

25 He should crush marauding outsiders,
and be happy
with the common folk
of his kingdom –
and they will share with him
his joys and sorrows.

26 He should make repeated
public announcements
well in advance before proceeding
on a tax collection,
his aim being to create
a climate of fear.

27 "A mahā-danger threatens us!
Enemies surround us.
This is an emergency.
It will not self-destruct,
like a bamboo shoot
after bursting into flower.

28 My enemies are poised
to attack our kingdom,
a horde of robbers
is knocking at our gates.
They are determined
to annihilate us.

29 In this hour of fearful crisis,
in this dire emergency,
I come to you
in order to save you.
To do this,
I need your wealth.

30 When the danger blows over,
and the enemies are crushed,
I will return your wealth.
If our enemies loot us,
nothing that they take
will ever be returned.

31 Their first target
will be your wives.
Your wives will be molested,
your wealth looted.
What is wealth for
if not to protect wives and sons?

32 Like a father
happy with his sons' prosperity,
I am happy you are wealthy.
To tide over this crisis,
I want nothing
that will hurt you needlessly.

33 Be like powerful bulls.
Bear this heavy load
for the sake of your country.
It is not right
to conceal wealth
when your country is in peril."

34 With sweet, persuasive words
such as these,
a king who understands well
the needs of his times
flings aside the reins
and takes the bull by the horns.

35 Keeping in view the pastures,
the upkeep costs,
their rival competitors,
the dangers of cattle-rearing,
a king
should tax cattle-owners.

36 There should be special exemptions
for cattle-owners,
a special mild attitude,
otherwise they are likely
to leave their profession
and flee to the forests.

37 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira!
it is the duty of a king
to protect
such agriculturists,
to help, encourage, support
and favour them.

38 O Bharata descendant!
Traders and merchants
should get preferential treatment,
for they are the ones
who strengthen a land's commerce
and agriculture.

39 A discerning king will always
try to please them.
He should be lenient
with them,
and levy upon them
the lightest taxes.

40 He should see that they get
every facility to prosper.
There is no greater good, Yudhiṣṭhira,
for a kingdom than this.

SECTION EIGHTY-EIGHT

1 "O mahā-Pitāmaha Pitāmaha!"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"Say a rājā has enough
in his treasury.
Tell me, what should he do
if he wants more?"

2 A rājā who respects dharma
will happily strive
for the welfare of his people,
keeping in mind
the time, the place,
and his capability.

3 Since he has the highest good
of his subjects in mind,
a rājā
should go about
governing his kingdom
as best as he can.

4 He should milk his country
like a bee gathering honey,
ever so gently.
No harsh tugging at the teats –
let him recall the example
of the calf.

5 Let the lord of men
gently suck his kingdom,
like a leech sucking blood;
or like a tigress
carrying a cub in her jaws,
without biting it.

6 Or like a sharp-toothed mouse
which bites the feet
without the victim realising it.
In the same way,
a king collects taxes
without harming the tax-payer.

7 Let him start with smaller
and smaller taxes,
and increase them slowly,
and imperceptibly.
In this way, he can grow
into more and more.

8 As, when one starts training
a young bull,
one begins with a light load,
and increases it progressively,
till a heavy one
is easily carried.

9 Reins and halters
must also be carefully used.
In these matters,
instant yoking is counter-productive.
To train beasts of burden,
slow means are recommended.

10 Impossible for a king to deal
with all his subjects
equally and instantaneously.
Mellow the stubborn first,
with sweet speech;
then tackle the common folk.

11 "Divide and rule"
is a good policy
to make safe those groups
who present a united front:
it is the best way
to exploit them to advantage.

12 It is essential that a king
never levy a tax
at the wrong place
and the wrong time.
He must correctly assess
the mood of the tax-payer.

13 The measures I am suggesting
are ideal ones –
no māyā or cunning in them.
Taming a horse improperly
will only make him
turn against you.

14 It goes without saying
that liquor-houses,
prostitutes, pimps,
actors, gamblers,
confidence tricksters,
and the like

15 Must be firmly dealt with,
because they create
law and order problems.
They are a threat
to the respectable majority
in the kingdom.

16 It was clearly laid down
in the past by Manu:
"In no case
other than an emergency
should a human being beg
from a fellow human.

17 If everyone started begging,
who would work?
And if people stopped working,
what would happen
to our world? –
It would be ruined.

18 According to śruti-wisdom,
a king who is unable
to curb anti-social elements
is punished
with one-fourth of the evil
that such people do.

19 O lord of men!
One-fourth of the evil;
but a rājā also enjoys
one-fourth of the good done.
So he should always keep
the ill-minded in check.

20 A rājā who does not restrain
these evil-doers
is himself an evil-doer,
and a rājā
who restrains them acquires
one-fourth of his people's dharma.

21 The infamous places
I have earlier referred to
are addictive, and ruin character.
How can a person
enslaved by kāma-lust
avoid doing what should not be done?

22 He gorges on meat, he drinks,
he runs after
others' wives and wealth.
What is worse,
others are tempted to follow
his bad example.

23 In times of dire distress,
begging is permissible.
To be compassionate then
is an act of dharma.
Fear and coercion
should not inspire compassion.

24 Let no beggars and robbers
roam in your kingdom;
they are parasites,
they live off others,
they are no good
to anyone.

25 See that your kingdom
is populated by subjects
who inspire and help others,
not by those
who are negative
and destructive.

26 Mahārāja, all corrupt officials
who make money on the sly
should be punished.
Dismiss them,
and appoint others who take
only what is lawful.

27 Agriculture, cattle-rearing, commerce
and similar activities
should be entrusted
by the king
to as many competent workers
as possible.

28 It goes to the discredit
of a rājā
if robbers and grasping officials
create insecurity
among agriculturists, traders
and cattle-rearers.

29 A king should honour the rich
with lavish feasts
and clothes and carriages,
and tell them:
"Accept these, and help me
to help my subjects."

30 O Bharata descendant!
  It goes without saying
that the wealthy comprise
  the cream of a kingdom.
The supreme importance of the rich
  is never in doubt.

31 A kingdom's real protectors
  are the wise,
the brave, the wealthy,
  the swamīs, the truthful,
the dharma-abiding, the intelligent,
  and the practisers of tapasyā.

32 Which is why, O earth-lord,
  you should be friendly
with all your subjects,
  and deal with them
with simplicity, truth, kindness
  and absence of anger.

33 O rājā! This will ensure
  the trust of your friends,
the strength of your army,
  the wealth of your treasury,
the stability of the kingdom.
  Truth and rectitude
are the power behind allies,
  treasury, and army.

SECTION EIGHTY-NINE

1 No one in your kingdom (said Bhīṣma)
  is permitted to cut down a tree
that bears edible fruit. The wise say
  roots and fruits belong by dharma to Brahmins.

2 But what Brahmins leave, others can take.
  A non-Brahmin cannot hurt a Brahmin
by preventing him from taking
  what is rightfully his to take.

3 O lord of men!
Should a Brahmin decide
to leave the kingdom
because he has no livelihood,
the king must arrange one
for him and his wife.

4 If the Brahmin does not relent,
the king should go
to an assembly of Brahmins
and say: "What will happen
to our way of life
if he behaves like this?"

5 If he still is adamant,
the king should say,
"Forget the past."
This, Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira,
is the eternal duty
of a king.

6 The king should go further,
it is said,
to placate and persuade him
by offering him
lucrative inducements;
but I do not approve of this.

7 The three main professions
are agriculture, cattle-rearing and commerce.
Superior, however,
is the wisdom
of the three Vedas,
transcending material pursuits.

8 The real robbers of society
are all those
who obstruct Vedic studies.
The Kṣatriyas
were created by Brahmā
to control these robbers.

9 O delighter of the Kauravas!
O king!
Kill your enemies,
protect your subjects,
perform yajñas,
be brave in battle.

10 Finest among rājās
is that rājā
who protects those
who need protection;
useless the rājā
who fails to do this.

11 To protect his people,
a king must always
be prepared for war.
Which is why, Yudhiṣṭhira,
he needs information
supplied by expert spies.

12 Protect foreigners
from your own people,
and your own people from foreigners.
Protect foreigners from foreigners,
and your own from your own.
Protect everyone, all the time.

13 Protect yourself, O rājā,
from everyone,
before you protect the world.
Wise men say
the root of all protection
is self-preservation.

14 A king must always introspect:
"What is my weakness?
My addiction?
What problems will I face?
All these faults I have –
Why? why me?"

15 He should send out agents
to all parts of the kingdom
to bring him news
if what he did till yesterday
has the approval or disapproval
of his people.

16 Not only that –
he must find out
if they are likely to continue
to give him approval.
Do the villages respect him,
does the country respect him?

17 Those who are learned in dharma,
those who have fortitude,
those who never retreat in battle,
those who depend
on the country and their rājā
for their livelihood,

18 All your ministers,
all the independent-minded too,
and all the neutrals,
all those who praise you,
and all those who choose
to find fault in you –

19 You must respect them, Yudhiṣṭhira,
with deserved respect.
Tāta! My child! Bharata!
You cannot please everyone.
Every person has friends and enemies
and the indifferent who don't care.

20 "How is it," asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"when people are equal,
say, in physical strength
and in guṇa-qualities,
one wins over the other
and lords it over him?"

21 Moving creatures (replied Bhīṣma)
devour the unmoving,
creatures with teeth
devour those without teeth,
and angry poisonous snakes
devour smaller snakes.

22 The king must always be vigilant
about his enemies
and about his own people.
If he becomes careless,
they will swoop upon him
like *bhāruṇḍa*-vultures.

23 See to it that the merchants
in your kingdom
who go to great hardships
buying and selling
in inaccessible regions
are not heavily taxed.

24 Farmers and peasants are the mainstay
of king and kingdom.
I trust
they are not taxed so heavily
that they are forced
to leave your kingdom.

25 The gods and the spirits
of *pitṛ*-ancestors
find their life-support
in farmers and peasants,
as do humans, serpents, rākṣasas,
and all birds and beasts.

26 O Bharata descendant!
These are the guidelines
for governing by a rājā.
Son of Pāṇḍu!
Let me elaborate a little more
on this subject.

SECTION NINETY

1 Let me explain to you
(continued Bhīṣma)
what Brahman-knowing Utathya,
son of Aṅgiras, said lovingly
to Yuvanāśva's son Māndhātā
regarding Kṣatriya-dharma.

2 I will tell you everything, Yudhiṣṭhira,
that wise-in-Brahman Utathya
placed before Māndhātā.
So listen to me carefully.

3 "Māndhātā, understand this clearly,"
said Utathya.
"The rājā exists for dharma,
not for kāma-pleasures.
The rājā is the protector
of the world.

4 The rājā who practises dharma
becomes a veritable god.
The rājā who practises
the ways of adharma
paves his way
to hell.

5 All creatures prosper by dharma,
and dharma
is the strength of a rājā.
The rājā whose justice
is based on dharma
is this world's real rājā.

6 A supremely dharmātmā rājā
blessed by Lākṣmī
the goddess of prosperity
is like Dharma personified.
Else, his subjects despise the gods and declare,
'Dharma does not exist.'

7 Those who assiduously practise
their sva-dharma
attain the pinnacle of success.
All human beings
believe in the auspicious benefits
of such behaviour.

8 When evil is not restrained,
dharma gets degraded
and mahā-adharma flourishes.
Fear haunts
the days and nights
of ordinary citizens.

9 *Tāta*! My child! Dear one!
If evil is not restrained,
who will be able to say,
'This belongs to me,'
where will be the dharma
that protects property?

10 When evil spreads rapidly,
no wife is safe,
no beast or fowl,
no field,
no dwelling –
everything is snatchable.

11 The gods then are denied
their pūjā,
the *pitṛs* their *svadhā*-offerings,
and guests
their pūjā-respect –
when evil spreads rapidly.

12 When evil is not restrained,
strict-vowed twice-born Brahmins
forsake their study
of the Vedas,
and performance of yajñas
is neglected by them.

13 O mahārāja!
If evil is not restrained,
men's minds become senile,
and men move about
stressed and agitated
and confused.

14 Keeping in mind this world
and the next,
ṛṣis took it upon themselves
to create the rājā,
a mahā-personality,
Dharma embodied.

15 The rājā in whom dharma
is *virāja* or radiant
is the true rājā.
The rājā in whom dharma is negligible
is a *vṛṣala,* a Śūdra,
a criminal, an outcaste.

16 Bhagavān Dharma is a bull,
a *vṛṣa*, and whoever
blocks this bull is a *vṛṣala*,
a Śūdra, an outcaste,
which is why all should work
for the glory of dharma.

17 When dharma is glorified,
everyone prospers;
when it is demeaned,
everyone suffers;
which is why dharma
should never be rejected.

18 O Indra-among-men!
Dharma develops
with the help of *dhana* or wealth.
Dharma is *dhāraṇa* the stabiliser.
It is that which sets limits
to over-reaching.

19 Svayambhu Self-Born Brahmā
created dharma
for the welfare of creation.
which is why
a rājā should utilise dharma
to benefit his subjects.

20 O tiger-among-rājās!
Always remember:
Dharma is supremely supreme.
O bull-brave one!
He alone is the rājā
whose rule is praiseworthy.

21 O finest of the Bharatas!
Curb your anger
and kāma-lust,
and rule with the help of dharma.
Nothing becomes a rājā more
than dharma.

22 The Brahmins, so to say,
are the yoni of dharma.
Therefore, O Māndhātā,
offer them pūjā-respect.
Do not be niggardly
in satisfying their needs.

23 It's when their wishes
are not fulfilled
that danger stalks a rājā.
His allies
fail to prosper,
and even turn hostile.

24 When Virocana's son Bali
started despising Brahmins,
Śrī the goddess of prosperity
who neutralises foes
left him – she was so incensed
with his behaviour.

25 She abandoned Bali,
and joined the Pāka-destroyer
Pākaśāsana-Indra.
Bali repented when he saw Śrī
consorting with city-pulverising
Puraṁdara-Indra.

26 O radiant one!
This is the fruit of malice
and *abhimān* self-importance.
Be careful, Māndhātā,
lest foe-harassing Śrī
decide to desert you.

27 According to śruti-wisdom,
O rājā,
Śrī's son is Pride,
begotten by Adharma.
Destroyed by pride
were many gods and antigods

28 And rāja-ṛṣis as well,
O earth-lord.
The man who conquers pride
is a rājā,
the man whom pride conquers
is a slave.

29 Māndhātā, if you wish to rule
your kingdom for long,
act in such a way
that you are not motivated
by these two:
pride and adharma.

30 Stay away from drunkards,
reckless adventurers,
the childish, and the insane,
specially the last.
If a group of such
desires to serve you, avoid them.

31 A minister whom he has punished
with a prison sentence,
women (specially married women),
mountainous areas,
insecure regions, forts, elephants,
horses, slithering snakes –

32 With all of them a king
should be on his guard.
He should avoid then at night.
He should not give in
to stinginess, self-importance,
boastfulness and anger.

33 A king must never have sex
with unknown women,
hermaphrodites, lewd women,
wives of others,
and also
young virgins.

34 Evil-minded rākṣasas are born
in families
when caste intermixture is rampant,
including eunuchs,
deformed babies, thick-tongued babies,
and brainless babies.

35 These and similar births
take place
if a rājā is careless.
It is imperative
that a rājā work for the welfare
of his subjects.

36 Mahā-problems are created
if a Kṣatriya
is careless and inefficient.
Adharma flourishes,
leading to the intermixture
of castes.

37 The summer months turn cold,
and winter months far from cold.
Untimely rain,
excessive heat,
and disease and pestilence
harass the populace.

38 Comets streak in the sky,
ominous planets
become prominent;
other signs too
herald the downfall
of the rājā.

39 How can a king protect himself
if he fails
to protect his people?
First his subjects decline;
then the rājā himself
is doomed.

40 When two gang up and steal from one;
when many gang up
and steal from two;
when girls are raped –
people say : 'It is the rājā
who is responsible!

41 When a rājā becomes careless
in the application of dharma,
no one can say with confidence
about anything, 'This is mine.' "

SECTION NINETY-ONE

1 Parjanya-Indra sends timely rain!
(continued Utathya)
The earth-lord abides by dharma!
When this happens,
a people's joy and prosperity
are assured.

2 A washerman is no washerman
who does not know
how to remove the dirt
from a soiled dress,
and cannot clean the dye
from a stained cloth.

3 Similarly, it can be said
a Śūdra is no Śūdra
if he takes upon himself
the duties
that are properly assigned
to Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas.

4 A Śūdra performs karma-service,
A Vaiśya goes in for agriculture,
a rājā administers
just punishment,
a Brahmin cultivates brahmacarya,
tapasyā, mantras, and truth.

5 A Kaṣtriya who can wash clean
and correct
a corrupt character –
he is the father
of his people,
he is the leader.

6 O bull-brave Bharata!
The Kṛta, Tretā,
Dvāpara and Kali yugas
depend on the rājā.
It is the rājā
who makes the yuga.

7 When the rājā is negligent,
the four castes,
the four Vedas,
the four āśrama-stages
of life
become confused and confusing.

8 When the rājā is negligent,
the three fires
(Gārhapatya, Āhavanīya, Daksiṇāgni),
the three Vedas (Ṛk, Sāma, Yajur),
and all the yajñas with all the different *dakṣiṇās*
lose value and become useless.

9 The rājā is the creator
of creatures,
the rājā is their destroyer.
As dharmātmā,
he is their creator,
as adharmātmā their destroyer.

10 When the rājā is negligent,
the rājā's wife suffers,
the rājā's sons suffer,
his relatives suffer,
and his friends
suffer also.

11 And all the animals also –
elephants, horses,
cows, camels, mules,
and asses –
all of them suffer
if he is negligent.

12 It is said, Māndhātā,
that a powerful rājā
was created to protect
weak subjects.
Indeed, weak subjects
ensure royal power.

13 O lord of the earth!
Royal power declines,
as do those who depend on it,
when a rājā
embarks on a policy
of adharma.

14 Never provoke weakness.
In my opinion,
it is next to impossible
to escape the fierce gaze
of a weak man, a muni,
and a venomous snake.

15 *Tāta*, dear one, do not ever
insult the weak,
for fear
the ferocity of their gaze
burn you and your family
to ashes.

16 Never insult the weak.
From the ashes
of the family
burnt by the gaze
of a weak man despised,
no seedling sprouts.

17 Weakness is stronger than strength,
because strength believes
that nothing is stronger than strength.
When weakness burns
the arrogance of strength,
nothing remains of strength.

18 When an exploited and humiliated man
cries out for help,
and finds no protector,
the king is punished
by a justice from above,
a supra-human sentence.

19 *Tāta*, dear one, do not delight
in exploiting the weak
for the sake of your glory.
Their fiery gaze
will destroy you,
like fire consuming fuel-wood.

20 Those who bring tears
to the eyes of those
whom they accuse falsely
will find their sons
and domestic animals
killed by those tears.

21 If not on you, on your sons;
if not on your sons,
then on your grandsons –
evil karma will bear fruit in due time,
like a cow giving milk
only after calving.

22 When a weak man, fatally attacked,
finds no saviour,
a mahā-fearful punishment
fashioned
by the will of the gods
overtakes the perpetrator.

23 When the Brahmins of a kingdom
have to resort to begging
in order to survive,
it is the rājā
responsible for their impoverishment
who is doomed.

24 And if the rājā's officers
collectively roam
in the countryside
fleecing his subjects –
it is the rājā who is guilty
of this mahā-crime.

25 If a rājā's officers,
out of greed or caprice,
extort money
out of helplessly pleading subjects,
this mahā-injustice
reflects upon the rājā.

26 A mahā-tree spreads
its branches and shelters
a multitude of birds;
when the tree is cut
or burned, that multitude
of life becomes homeless.

27 A rājā flourishes
when his subjects love dharma
and praise his good guṇas;
a rājā is doomed
when, forsaking dharma,
they practise adharma.

28 When criminals go unpunished,
the law-abiding declare him
the Rājā of Kali-yuga.
When the wicked are punished,
the rājā's kingdom
waxes in prosperity.

29 When a deserving minister
is honoured, and entrusted
with policy, and war-preparedness,
the kingdom prospers,
and for long does the rājā
enjoy the whole world.

30 Supreme dharma is the blessing
of the rājā
who offers pūjā-respect
to subjects
who do good karma
and speak sweet speech.

31 The dharma of a rājā
is to enjoy what is his
after sharing prosperity,
to belittle no one,
and to humble the proud
and the powerful.

32 The dharma of a rājā
is to protect all
with word, body, and deed,
and not to pardon
even his own son
if guilty of misconduct.

33 The dharma of a rājā
is to help
the weak and dispossessed,
and to restore to them
their lost subsistence
and security.

34 The dharma of a rājā
is to protect
the entire kingdom
from robbers and looters,
and to wage
victorious war.

35 The dharma of a rājā
is not to forgive
even the person
closest to his heart
if he is guilty of mischief
in speech and deed.

36 The dharma of a rājā
is to shelter
those who seek refuge
as he would his own sons,
and never to violate
a noble tradition.

37 The dharma of a rājā
is to curb
kāma and hatred,
and with śraddhā
perform yajñas
with lavish *dakṣiṇās.*

38 The dharma of a rājā
is to wipe the tears
of the distressed,
the helpless, and the elderly,
and fill their hearts
with joy.

39 The dharma of a rājā
is to promote
the welfare of allies and friends,
crush enemies,
and give pūjā-respect
to all good people.

40 The dharma of a rājā
is to cherish truth,
give gifts of land,
offer pūjā-respect to guests,
and take care
of dependants.

41 This world and the next
are the rewards
of the rājā
who can discriminate
when to restrain
and when to encourage.

42 Māndhātā! The rājā is Parameśvara,
the supreme divinity,
to those who cherish dharma;
and he is also like Yama.
Subduing his senses, he prospers;
indulging them, he declines.

43 The dharma of a rājā
is to honour
ṛtvik-priests, purohitas
and ācāryas,
and encourage them
in their activities.

44 Like Yama the god of death
who is impartial,
the rājā must never take sides
in the implementation of justice;
all his subjects
are the same to him.

45 O bull-brave hero!
Compare the rājā
to Sahasrākṣa-Indra,
the thousand-eyed deity.
What he sees as dharma
is dharma.

46 Persevere and cultivate well
the virtues
of patience, percipience,
fortitude and intelligence,
and distinguish between good and bad
for your people.

47 Learn to impress people;
win them over
with gifts and sweet words
Keep city-dwellers happy,
and keep happy
the countryfolk too.

48 A rājā who is not versatile,
tāta, dear one,
not skilful and dedicated,
will govern poorly.
Kingship is a mahā-burden,
a difficult occupation.

49 Only a wise and brave ruler
who is expert
in the art of punishing
makes a good king.
Not to punish is to be a fool
or a eunuch.

50 With the help of ministers
goodlooking, well-born,
skilled, loyal, and deeply learned,
a king should understand his people's minds,
including
tapasyā-practisers and āśrama-dwellers.

51 This will teach you about
the supreme dharma of all creatures;
with this insight,
wherever you are,
in your kingdom or another's,
your dharma is secure.

52 Artha, Kāma, and Dharma –
of these three,
Dharma is the highest.
There is happiness
for dharmātmās in this world
and the next.

53 Attracted by high pūjā-respect,
men will abandon
even their wives and sons.
To win people over,
to give gifts,
to speak sweetly,

54 To be never negligent,
to cultivate cleanliness –
these bring mahā-prosperity
to a rājā.
You must never, Māndhātā,
neglect these qualities.

55 A rājā must always
be on his guard.
Aware of his weaknesses,
and his enemy's weaknesses,
he should conceal his own,
and attack his enemy's.

56 Vāsava-Indra, Yama, Varuṇa
and the rāja-ṛṣis
followed this excellent principle.
You also
should always follow
their example.

57 O bull-brave hero!
O mahāraja!
Emulate the example
of the rāja-ṛṣis
and take
to the celestial path.

58 O Bharata descendant!
Praised in this world and the next
by mahā-radiant gods,
ṛṣis, *pitṛs* and gandharvas
is the rājā who is dedicated
to dharma.

59 O Bharata! (continued Bhīṣma)
Inspired by the advice of Utathya,
wasting no time,
Māndhātā did as advised,
and gained lordship
over the entire earth.

60 You too, O earth-ruler,
should take his advice
and put dharma in practice,
and so gain
not only the whole world
but heaven also.

SECTION NINETY-TWO

1 "O incomparable Kaurava Pitāmaha,"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira, "how should
a Kṣatriya dedicated to dharma behave?
Explain this to me."

2 Bhīṣma said: They say wise Vāmadeva,
in the distant historical past,
sang a song filled with his insights
into the essence of this matter.

3 An eminently knowledgeable rājā,
of great probity,
and purity of mind and body,
Vasumanas approached
the tapasyā-practising mahā-ṛṣi Vāmadeva,
and asked:

4 "*Bhagavan*, revered one, instruct me
on dharma and artha.
What kind of sva-dharma
must I practise
so that my character
does not deteriorate?"

5 That finest of tapasyā-practisers,
radiant Vāmadeva
replied to Vasumanas
who was sitting there
as golden-complexioned
as Nahuṣa's son Yayāti:

6 "Abide only by dharma.
Understand this:
Nothing excels dharma.
Only that rājā
who is firm in dharma
conquers this earth.

7 Glorious is the earth-lord
who places dharma above artha,
and uses dharma
to improve his mind
and hone the quality
of his intelligence.

8 On the other hand,
the rājā
who pursues adharma
and brute force
is abandoned,
first, by dharma and, secondly, by artha.

9 And he who violates dharma
with the help
of corrupt and dissolute ministers
deserves to be executed
by his people.
He, and all his, are doomed.

10 A kāma-obsessed braggart
who neglects
to collect artha for his people
is also doomed
even if he has the whole world
in his hands.

11 Swelling with glorious prosperity
like the ocean
with tributary rivers
is the rājā
disciplined, intelligent, unenvious,
seeking others' welfare.

12 Let him never assert,
"I am absolutely full,"
when referring to dharma, artha,
kāma, knowledge, and friends.
An earth-ruler
can never have enough of these.

13 His life-journey
depends on these.
Let him listen and learn
and he will gain from them
glory, fame, *śrī*-prosperity,
and loyal subjects.

14 Mahā-greatness is his
who cherishes dharma,
reflects on dharma and artha,
and embarks on plans
only after clearly examining
the merits of both.

15 Doomed is the rājā
who is ungenerous,
unaffectionate, reckless,
and punishes his people
indiscriminately.
His downfall is swift.

16 Foolish is the king
who fails to see
his own wicked deeds.
He is infamous
in this life,
and gets hell in the next.

17 But if he gives respect
to the respectworthy,
and is generous with gifts,
and caring for his people –
then they will take his problems
as their own.

18 Happiness is not his
to enjoy for long,
who has no guru to turn to,
who asks no questions,
who wallows in the pleasures
that artha provides.

19 Happiness is always his
to enjoy for long,
who has a guru to turn to,
who enquires about artha,
who places dharma
above material gain.

SECTION NINETY-THREE

1 When a king exploits the weak
(continued Vāmadeva), by adharma,
his followers make that the source
of their livelihood.

2 They emulate the wickedness
of their rājā,
and it does not take long
for that country
of corrupt administration
to be ruined.

3 Everything works out fine
so long as this is kept
within limits.
In times of distress,
however, even the king's own men
will desert him.

4 Doomed is the ruthless rājā
who flouts
the injunctions of the śāstras,
and embarks
on a high-handed policy
of exploitation.

5 Violaters of Kṣatriya dharma
are those Kṣatriyas
who fail to apply the principles
of the Kṣatriya code
to the victors of a battle
and to the vanquished.

6 Violater of Kṣatriya dharma
is the king
who fails to give respect
to an enemy
he has captured,
simply because he hates his enemy.

7 If able, a rājā should be generous
and show sympathy
and give relief to the suffering.
His subjects will love him,
and his glory will never fade.

8 Should he happen to displease
a person,
he should try also to please him.
With such kindness
a person who has been hurt
can be won over.

9 Avoid lying,
do good without expecting return.
Do not let kāma
and anger and hatred
stand in the way
of dharma.

10 Give up deceit, cherish truth, dharma,
restraint, civility,
and follow Kṣatriya dharma.
Disarm an enemy
by welcoming questions, replying learnedly,
acting cautiously and unmaliciously.

11 Don't go wild with joy
when good is done,
or depressed when ill is done.
Uppermost is the welfare
of your people,
even in a financial crisis.

12 Always successful is the earth-lord
who uses his gunas
for the welfate of his people.
His karma fructifies.
Śrī the goddess of prosperity
never deserts him.

13 Deeply cherish the true follower,
your bhakta
who never wishes you any harm,
who is always
thinking of what is good
for you.

14 For any major project,
appoint a person
who has disciplined his senses,
is totally trustworthy,
who is clean in and out,
and enterprising.

15 And for financial dealings,
appoint a person
who has all those guṇas,
and keeps you happy
by promptly carrying out
all your orders.

16 Śrī deserts the king who appoints
a fool, a voluptuary,
a greedy man, a rogue, a swindler,
a gambler, a womaniser,
or a hunting-addict,
to any mahā-project,

17 Or indeed any person
of questionable character
whose loyalty is in doubt,
or one who is a spendthrift,
or who drinks heavily,
or one not widely read.

18 Mahā-greatness is attained
 by the rājā
who looks after himself
 as well as his people.
His people prosper,
 his glory never fades.

19 Superior is the rājā
 who employs
his trusted friends
 as spies
to report on the activities
 of other earth-lords.

20 After harming a king,
 you cannot escape, saying,
"I'll stay far away from him."
 He will swoop upon you
like a hawk on a prey,
 no matter how far you are.

21 Firm-rooted in his strength
 must a king be
before he chooses to attack
 a weak enemy.
Attack a weaker foe,
 never a stronger.

22 Overcome the earth with prowess,
 and protect your people
with the help of dharma.
 Abide by dharma
even when routing your enemy
 on the battlefield.

23 Nothing in this world
 lasts for ever,
nothing escapes disease and decay.
 That is why a rājā
should cherish dharma,
 and rule with dharma.

24 These five protect a kingdom
at all times:
strategic fortification,
readiness for war,
rule by dharma, sound advice,
and social happiness.

25 Supreme among rājās
is the rājā
who attends to these five.
He is the only one
qualified to rule and protect
a kingdom.

26 Impossible for a single person
to attend to all five –
which is why a rājā
must appoint dependable officers,
and by so doing
rule happy and for long.

27 People consider that man king
who is magnanimous,
impartial towards all,
soft-spoken, pure-minded,
and does not forsake
humane values.

28 Admired and obeyed by the world
is the king
who, after imbibing
the finest knowledge,
gives up his own limited
views and opinions.

29 Who refuses to listen
to well-meant criticism
from an ally or friend,
and is inattentive
to anyone whose views
are opposed to his,

30 Who does not respect the words
of noble people
who have either won a war
or lost a war –
such a king violates
Kṣatriya dharma.

31 A king should be wary
of a minister he has punished,
of women specially,
of inaccessible mountains,
and snakes,
and unfamiliar elephants and horses.

32 Inviting disaster,
and drowning in inescapable distress,
is the king who ignores
his chief ministers
and makes low-minded people
his favourites.

33 Walking hand in hand with doom
is the king
who does not respect guṇa-rich,
unjealous kinsmen,
allowing anger and malice
to mar his judgement.

34 Long-lasting is the fame
of the king
whose heart has lovingkindness
for learned people
even if they are not always
to his liking.

35 Let a king find delight
in health-promoting projects,
implemented at the right time.
No depression when things
do not please him,
no ecstasy when they are very pleasing.

36 His concern should be:
"Which rājā likes me?
Which rājā seeks my protection
because he fears me?
Why is that rājā
preferring to remain neutral?"

37 No matter how strong you are,
never trust an enemy,
no matter how weak he is.
He will swoop on you
like a *bhāruṇḍa* bird of prey
and devour you.

38 A wicked-ātmaned person
will try to harm a superior,
however guṇa-rich,
however sweet-speaking.
Never place your trust
in such a man.

39 Discoursing on this Rāja-upaniṣad,
Nahuṣa's son Yayāti said:
"A person dedicated to humanist values
will conquer even his worst enemy."

SECTION NINETY-FOUR

1 A king should win victories
without going to war
(continued Vāmadeva).
O lord of men!
A victory won by war
is the worst kind of victory.

2 If a king is himself unsure
and insecure,
let him not annex new kingdoms.
A weak rājā
does not become strong
by adding more territories.

3 Only that king is firm-rooted
whose land
is overflowing with prosperity,
whose subjects are loyal,
whose officials
are healthy and happy.

4 If the soldiers of a king
are contented,
and expert in duping his enemies,
he will be able
to subjugate the entire world
with a very small army.

5 If the enemy is very powerful,
begin with conciliation;
if that does not work,
try giving gifts;
that failing, try dissension.
Such a policy deserves praise.

6 Should this triple technique
also prove
to be fruitless,
let him quickly
adopt the punitive measure
of declaring war.

7 Firm-rooted is the kingdom
of the earth-lord
whose city people
and countryside people
are wealthy, devoted to him,
and well stocked with provisions.

8 The people of a kingdom
can be industrious,
or otherwise;
brutal or gentle.
They need to be monitored
and disciplined.

9 *Cāṇḍālas, mlecchas,*
confirmed criminals,
work-haters, procrastinators,
the powerful and influential,
singers and actors,
and āśrama-inmates –

10 These need to be monitored.
Firm-rooted
is the kingdom of the earth-lord
whose subjects are wealthy,
and eager to promote
the kingdom's prosperity.

11 Only when the time
is perfectly right
for such a venture,
should a self-confident king
decide to appropriate
the wealth of other kings.

12 Only that king prospers
who develops resources,
who has sympathy for all,
who protects himself,
and does not indulge
in luxurious enjoyments.

13 If he behaves falsely
with his own people
who are behaving honestly,
he cuts only himself –
he is like an axe
cutting one's own forest.

14 For too many people
are always ready
to bring down a king,
but no rājā is hated
who knows the art
of controlling his anger.

15 Never does a wise king
do anything
that is condemned by good men.
If he does,
his ātman will prick him,
his people blame him.

16 But when he conscientiously
performs his duty,
his ātman does not prick him,
nor do the subjects
show disrespect
to their rājā.

17 The lord of the earth
who behaves
in this manner with his people
wins victories
in this world
and in the next.

18 (Bhīṣma said:) The king did
as Vāmadeva advised.
Surely, both the worlds are yours too,
if you do the same.

SECTION NINETY-FIVE

1 "What kind of dharma is it,"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"when one Kṣatriya goes to war
against a fellow-Kṣatriya?
What kind of victory is this?
Please enlighten me."

2 An earth-lord seeking dominion
(replied Bhīṣma),
entering another's kingdom
with or without allies
should declare, "I am your rājā,
I will always protect you.

3 Pay me the tribute tax
as ordained by dharma.
Or refuse me – and fight!"
All is well
if the king is welcomed
and his offer accepted.

4 But suppose, O lord of men,
the ruler approached
happens to be not a Kṣatriya
and, for whatever reason, refuses –
then, for his misconduct,
he deserves chastisement.

5 It is also possible, however,
that a ruler's subjects
may take up arms to defend him
if he avoids war,
or is incapable of protecting them,
or are outraged by the ultimatum.

6 "What I would like to know, Pitāmaha,"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"is how a Kṣatriya rājā
should fight
another Kṣatriya rājā
who attacks him."

7 A Kṣatriya king must refuse
to fight another Kṣatriya
(replied Bhīṣma)
if that king is not wearing armour.
It should be one to one:
You fight me, I fight you.

8 If he comes clad in armour,
you put on armour.
If he comes at the head
of an army,
you challenge him
with an army.

9 If he employs unfair means,
you employ unfair means.
But if he fights you,
using dharma,
you fight back,
using dharma.

10 Horse-rider must not attack
a chariot-warrior;
chariots must target chariots.
You must not attack
a distressed, or panic-stricken
or defeated opponent.

11 Only the wicked will use
poisoned arrows
and flesh-shredding barbed arrows.
Fight fairly.
Do not get enraged if your enemy
is not attacking you fatally.

12 If injury results from two men
who have fought fairly,
the one wounded must be spared.
Spare also the warrior
who is helpless, and the warrior
who has no son.

13 Spare the warrior whose weapon
is shattered,
or whose bowstring is sliced,
or chariot destroyed.
Send him home;
if wounded, treat him medically.

14 But one who is not wounded
should not be spared –
this is Sanātana Dharma.
Self-Born Svayambhuva's son Manu
ordained that dharma dictate
the conduct of war.

15 The dharma of good people
should always be applied
to those who are good.
If a Kṣatriya
wins a war of dharma
by using adharma,

16 He is using his ātman
to kill his ātman;
he is destroying himself.
This is wickedness.
The good use dharma
to overcome the wicked.

17 Better to die
in the practice of dharma
than win victories by wickedness.
Adharma, O rājā, like a tree,
does not bear fruit
instantaneously;

18 But when it does,
it consumes the entire tree,
root and branch.
A wicked man
is delighted
with ill-gotten gains,

19 And wallows more and more
in the prosperity
obtained by him immorally.
He smiles mockingly
at dharma,
saying "Dharma does not exist."

20 Because of his lack of śraddhā,
he brings about
his own doom.
He thinks he is immortal,
but he is trapped
in the noose of Varuṇa.

21 He struts about,
swollen with wickedness,
like a puffed-up leather bag.
Then he is gone,
like a tree uprooted
by a rushing river.

22 He is reduced to rubbish,
like a clay pot
smashed on a stone slab.
All he gets is ill fame.
A king should win and prosper
only with the help of dharma.

SECTION NINETY-SIX

1 Never should a king (continued Bhīṣma)
try to annex land by adharma.
Which earth-lord is respected
if he wins victories by adharma?

2 Fragile is the victory, and uncertain,
that is won by adharma.
O bull-brave Bharata! Such a victory
ruins both rājā and kingdom.

3 Never harm a warrior who,
his armour shredded,
stands before you
with hands folded in *añjali,*
and supplicates for mercy,
saying, "I am yours."

4 No need to go to war against
against a king
who has capitulated to superior force.
Imprison him
for a year if you like –
then give him a new lease of life.

5 A virgin forcibly taken
by a king
should remain untouched for a year.
This rule applies to all wealth –
indeed, to anything
taken by force.

6 On the other hand,
it should not remain unused, wasted.
Give to Brahmins the milk
from cow-property.
Put oxen to work on the fields,
and care for them properly.

7 Dharma is very clear on this –
only a rājā
should go to war against a rājā.
No one
not a rājā
should attack a rājā.

8 Should a Brahmin decide
to intervene
between two battling armies
to make peace,
they should immediately
stop fighting, and listen.

9 To flout and insult a Brahmin
is to go against
an eternal ethical tradition.
And anyone
calling himself a Kṣatriya
who breaks this tradition

10 Does not deserve to be honoured,
and is not welcomed
in any assembly of people.
And if anyone
defiles dharma
and violates tradition –

11 If any earth-lord wins victories
in this manner,
what good is he?
What greater victory
can there be than a victory
won by means of dharma?

12 After subduing the uncultured
un-āryan elements
in his kingdom with brute force,
a rājā should mollify them
with sweet words and gifts.
An excellent policy!

13 Because if he continues to use
excessive force,
repression in the country
will make them go
to the king's enemies
and wait for a timely revenge.

14 When a king is in trouble,
O rājā,
his ill-wishers waste no time
flattering his enemies,
taking their side,
and plotting his downfall.

15 Even your ill-wisher
should never be insulted.
Nor should he be tortured
in any way.
Grievous offence will make him
a veritable martyr.

16 Very little pressure is enough
to win over
an easily gratified earth-lord.
For such a person,
just to be alive
is the greatest blessing.

17 Deep-rooted is the kingdom
of a rājā
who is loved by his people,
whose ministers are content,
whose land overflows
with prosperity.

18 A *Loka-vid* World-knower
is the rājā
who offers pūjā-respect
to *ṛtviks*,
purohitas, ācāryas
and all who are wise in *śruti*.

19 In this way did the supreme god Indra
obtain
lordship of the earth,
and in this way
did earth-lords desiring the world
emulate Indra.

20 O rājā! After subjugating a rājā
in a mahā-battle,
Pratardana took away the wealth
and the immortal plants
and medicinal herbs,
but did not appropriate the land.

21 Divodāsa, on the other hand,
took possession
of the *agnihotra* rituals,
the *haviṣya* libations
and food-offerings –
for which he is condemned.

22 O descendant of Bharata!
With the exception
of the wealth of *śruti*-knowers
and tapasyā-practisers,
Nābhāga gave kingdoms as *dakṣiṇā*
to palace priests.

23 Yudhiṣṭhira, I recommend the way
the dharma-knowing rājās
of the distant past
behaved as they did
in whatever they did,
in minor matter or major.

24 Māyā-trickery is not advised,
nor is pride.
Let all the finest learning
inspire an earth-lord
who seeks the victory
that brings real success.

SECTION NINETY-SEVEN

1 "O lord of men!" (said Yudhiṣṭhira)
"Than Kṣatriya-dharma
there is no greater evil,
for it sanctions in war
the mahā-slaughter of people
by a rājā.

2 O learned bull-brave Bharata!
What I want to know is
which karma by an earth-lord
wins him which worlds?"

3 By curbing civil-doers (said Bhīṣma),
by cherishing good-doers,
by performing yajñas
and giving in charity,
rājās purify themselves
from defects and demerits.

4 A rājā who seeks victory
does exploit people
and cause great distress,
but, victory won,
he promotes the prosperity
of his subjects.

5 Gifts and yajñas and tapasyā
wipe out
the wickedness of a king,
and with fresh virtue
he devotes himself to the welfare
of all creatures.

6 A farmer reaping a field
removes weeds
even as he collects the harvest.
Weeds are cut,
and the grain is cut –
but only the grain is preserved.

7 Similarly, war-weapons are used
to destroy those
who are considered
as deserving of destruction,
but for those who are spared
is progress and prosperity.

8 A king who protects his subjects
from pillage of wealth,
loss of life, and disasters –
such a king is indeed
a life-giver, a happiness-bestower,
a god of wealth Dhanada.

9 Such a rājā performs
all the rites of a yajña,
his *dakṣiṇā* is his people's
freedom from fear –
he enjoys happiness now
and in Indra's world later.

10 If he fights his enemies
to protect Brahmins,
by offering himself
as a veritable yajña-pole,
his *dakṣiṇā* equals the offerings
of countless yajñas.

11

Fighting enemies fearlessly,
calmly absorbing
the arrows of his enemies –
the thirty classes of gods
can find no king on earth
superior to him.

12

Exactly the number of arrows
that graze and pierce
the skin of this battling king –
exactly that number
of all-desire-fulfilling worlds
does he enjoy.

13

And the blood that streams
down his body
as he fights furiously –
that blood becomes
the means of cleansing him
of all imperfections.

14

The wise in the ways of dharma
have this to say:
No mortification of tapasyā
exceeds the burning pain
of the wounds of a Kṣatriya
on a battlefield.

15

Like people expecting downpours
of life-giving showers
from Parjanya-rain-clouds,
men-of-adharma and cowards
hide behind warriors
on the battlefield.

16

If, even in a time of peace,
a brave hero
offers such protection
to the fear-stricken,
he should be hero-worshipped.
But this does not always happen.

17 It would be perfect if,
out of gratitude,
they namaskara-ed him
for the good
he has done.
But this does not always happen.

18 They all look the same,
all human beings –
but how mahā-different they are,
on the battlefield! –
shouting and screaming and yelling
when attacked by enemies!

19 The hero attacks headlong;
the coward pulls back –
not for him
the road to heaven;
he has made up his mind
to desert his comrades.

20 *Tāta*! My child!
Let no such scoundrels
be born in your home!
They flee the battlefield,
and shuffle in the safety
of their homes.

21 The gods, led by Indra,
make their life inauspicious.
The Kṣatriya
who saves himself
by deserting his comrades
on the battlefield

22 Will get beaten to death
with heavy sticks,
or burnt to death by fire
rolled up in straw,
or smothered to death
like a sacrificed animal.

23 It is adharma for a Kṣatriya
to die
in the comfort of his bed,
spitting phlegm
and passing urine involuntarily,
and moaning piteously.

24 Those who know the wisdom
of our ancient traditions
have no respect for the karma
of a Kṣatriya
who leaves this world
with an unwounded body.

25 *Tāta*! My child!
No praise for a Kṣatriya
who dies at home.
For a hero it is inheroic,
it is adharma,
it is demeaning.

26 "Oh, how I suffer!"
"Oh, what pain!"
"What mahā-evil did I do
to deserve this!"
Drooping-faced, smelling of stench,
upsetting his relatives,

27 Envying the healthy,
whining again and again
that death take him away –
how can any brave man
with any *abhimān* self-respect
desire to die like this?

28 A Kṣatriya who has killed enemies
on the battlefield
should die with his body
pierced by sharp
weapons of war –
surrounded by his relatives.

29 A brave warrior is inspired
by hope of victory
and by fierce aggressive anger –
he does not feel the wounds
inflicted on him
by his enemies.

30 He fulfils his sva-dharma
by dying a death
that earns the pūjā-respect
of the whole world,
and he obtains the heaven
of Śakra-Indra.

31 A brave warrior,
reckless of life,
never shows his back in battle
to the enemy;
he attains the heaven
of Indra himself.

32 A brave warrior who,
hemmed in by enemies,
shows no fear
when facing death
will attain the worlds
of undying felicity.

SECTION NINETY-EIGHT

1 "Pitāmaha!" asked Yudhiṣṭhira. "Tell me about the worlds attained by unretreating warriors."

2 Bhīṣma replied: About this, Yudhiṣṭhira, there is an ancient historical dialogue between Ambarīṣa and Indra.

3 When Nābhāga's son Ambarīṣa attained difficult-to-attain heaven, he found his general already in Śakra-Indra's realm –

4 His own general soaring up there in a wonderful, dazzling celestial vehicle –

5 It was Sudeva, and Ambarīṣa was so wonderstruck by the spectacle that the large-minded king asked Vāsava-Indra:

6 "I am ruler of the entire sea-girdle dearth. Inspired by desire for dharma, I follow the śāstras and protect the four castes.

7 I have practised severe brahmacarya, followed the dictates of my guru, studied the Vedas, and implemented the śāstra teachings for rājās with dharma.

8 I have fed my guests food and drink, propitiated my *pitṛ*-ancestors, received *dīkṣā*-blessings from ṛṣis, and performed superlative yajñas for the gods.

9 O Vāsava-Indra! I have observed Kṣatriya dharma, and defeated all my enemies.

10 O Devarāja! How is it that gentle-ātmaned Sudeva, my general, has arrived here first?

11 O Śakra-Indra! He performed no massive sacrifices, he gratified no Brahmins as decreed by tradition. How is he better than me?

12 How has he obtained what is so hard even for gods to obtain?" Śakra-Indra replied: 'You, O earth-lord, witnessed the karma

13 Of Sudeva in the past when you, O king, were ruling the earth with dharma. You had three-to-defeat enemies then who wished you ill:

14 Saṁyama, Viyama, and mahā-powerful Suyama – three hard-to-subdue, valiant-in-war rākṣasas.

15 These three, O lord of the earth, were sons of the rākṣasa whose name was Śataśṛṅga.

16 You remember you once ordered a mahā-yajña, the Aśvamedha, to propitiate the gods, and these three rākṣasas turned up to frustrate the sacrifice.

17 Leading a mahā-army of a hundred crore rākṣasas, they made captive all your subjects.

18 They traumatised your people, they terrorised your army. And you dismissed Sudeva from the command of your army

19 On the basis of advice given to you by ministers who were hostile to him and wanted him removed from office.

20 Then, strangely, O lord of the earth, acting again on their fresh advice, you reappointed Sudeva as general,

21 Because, O lord of men, you wanted the ferocious rākṣasas exterminated, and said to him: "Go, wipe out the rākṣasas,

22 And do not return till you have freed my people and my soldiers." Obeying your command, O king, Sudeva

23 Hurried to the place where the captives were held. There he saw the mahā-fierce massive army of the rākṣasas.

24 So awed was Sudeva by the spectacle that he wondered if even Indra, the gods and antigods combined could defeat the rākṣasa hordes.

25 *Even with all his celestial weapons of war, Ambarīṣa is not one-sixteenth as powerful as the rākṣasas. What can I do?*

26 Thinking this, O earth-lord, Sudeva ordered the army back to where you were sitting, with your devious ministers.

27 And Sudeva sought refuge with the cremation-dwelling lord of the universe, Mahādeva Rudra-Śiva, and propitiated the bull-bannered deity.

28 Propitation over, he offered his head as oblation. Moved by compassion, Deva-deva Śiva caught hold of his right hand

29 Which was clutching the weapon, and said: "Why are you doing this, son?" Touching Mahādeva-Śiva's feet with his head, he said:

30 "*Bhagavan*! O lord of the gods! I have failed to defeat the rākṣasas on the battlefield. I have no desire to live any more.

31 O Jagat-pate! Lord of the universe! Mahādeva! Grant me refuge. I am useless, O world-lord. I seek your grace.

32 Ambarīṣa and his ministers, Mahādeva, are furious with me. They do not want me back without defeating the rākṣasas." Mahādeva-Śiva saw mahā-ātmaned Sudeva prostrate and, seeking the welfare of all,

33 He invoked and summoned guṇa-rich Dhanur-veda itself, the Veda-of-War, with chariots, horses, elephants, and hosts of ornamented celestial weapons,

34 And the supremely mahā-fortune-favoured chariot with which he razed to the ground the city of Tripura, and his Pināka bow, and sword. These weapons, with which Rudra-Śaṅkara-Śiva

35 Routed all the antigods, were offered by the deity to Sudeva. Then Tryambaka-Śiva-Mahādeva said to the general Sudeva:

36 "This chariot, Sudeva, gives you invincibility against the gods and antigods. But let no māyā make you set your feet on the ground.

37 Stay in the chariot, and annihilate all the Dānava antigods. Rākṣasas and *piśācas* will not so much as even dare to look at this chariot,

38 Which has the dazzle of a thousand suns. They dare not fight you." Defeating the rākṣasas (said Indra), freeing the captives,

39 Sudeva lost his life in a hand-to-hand combat, but not before he killed the rākṣasa Viyama."

40 *Tāta*! My child! (continued Indra) Sudeva performed the Supreme Mahā-Yajña of War. All warriors perform that yajña.

41 It goes without saying that every warrior who puts on armour and gets *dīkṣā*-initiation in battle is entitled to perform such a yajña.

42 Ambarīṣa asked: "What are the *haviṣya*-libations in such a yajña? What is the *dakṣiṇā*, O Śatakrutu-Indra? The *ṛtviks*?"

43 "The elephants are the *ṛtvik*-priests," (replied Indra), "horses the *adhvaryu*-priests, foe-flesh the libations, blood the ghee.

44 Jackals, vultures and ravens are the *sadasya*-participants who drink the ghee and eat the *haviṣya*-remnants.

45 Small *prāsa*-spears, *tomara*-lances, swords, *śakti*-spears, axes, sharp dazzling whetted weapons, are the *sruc*-ladles of the sacrificers.

46 The straight, sharp, whetted arrow that slices through enemy flesh is the mahā-*sruc*-ladle thrust in the sacred fire by the sacrificer.

47 The sword sheathed in a tiger-skin scabbard, that has an elephant-tusk handle, and can sever an elephant's shoulder, is in battle the sacrificial *sphya*-stick.

48 The injuries inflicted by glittering, sharp swords, small spears, *śaktis* and other weapons fashioned out of *śaikya*-iron

49 Are the wealth collected variously from the noble-born participants. And the blood that drenches the earth in the fury of battle

50 Is the final libation of the *homa*, the all-wish-fulfilling cow Kāmadhuk. The fierce front-rank shouts of "Cut!" "Slice!"

51 Are the Vedic sāma-songs chanted in the abode of Yama the god of death. The enemy's front-rank is the vessel for the *havirdhāna*-libation – so it is said.

52 Elephants, horses and armour-clad warriors make up the *śyena-cit* hawk-altar of the sacred fire.

53 Thousands of headless corpses standing erect on the battlefield are the warrior's eight-sided *yūpa* slaughter-poles of *khādira* wood.

54 O earth-lord! The agonised trumpeting of hook-goaded elephants, and noisy slapping of palm-claps, are the *vaṣaṭ*-chants.

55 And, O king, the *dundubhi*-drums are the three Sāma-songs of the *udgātā* priest. If a person loses his dearly-loved life to save Brahmin's property from looters,

56 His sacrifice becomes a limitless *dakṣiṇā*-gift, the central pole of the yajña. A hero who, for his lord's sake, faces the enemy

57 And does not turn his back, attains my very own heaven. Blue-scabbarded sword and *parigha*-club-shaped severed arms –

58 He who heaps the *vedī*-altar with these, attains my very own heaven. He who, warring for victory, with no one helping,

[XII:98:59-61]

59 Penetrates the centre of the enemy army, attains my very own heaven. A river of blood, kettledrums its frogs and turtles,

60 Warrior's bones its pebbles and stones, bleeding flesh its hard-to-cross slime, swords and shields its boats, human hair its moss and weeds;

61 Corpses of horses and elephants, and shattered chariots its huge stepping stones; pennants and war-flags its intertwining reeds; a river floating with elephant carcases;

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62 A river difficult for humans to ferry across to the other shore; elephants the mahā-crocodiles of this other-world river;

63 Plain swords and double-edged *ṛṣṭi*-swords its boats, vultures and ravens its rafts; a river traumatising weaklings and cowards;

64 According to *smṛti*, a river that is the final purifying bath of a warrior. A warrior who heaps the *vedī*-altar with heads of foes,

65 And carcases of horses and elephants, attains my very own heaven. The warrior who makes the enemy's front-rank his "Wife's Place"

66 And his army's rear-rank the *havir-dhāna* sacrificial vessel, and the warriors stationed in the south as the *sadasya*-participants, and the north as the *āgnīghra-ṛtviks*,

67 To whom the enemy is like a wife eagerly approached – no heaven is beyond him. The open space between two hostile armies

68 Is the *vedī*-altar of the yajña, and the three Vedas are its three sacred fires. The fleeing warrior who is killed by his foes

69 Goes straight to hell, without exception. Whose flow of blood drenches the *vedī* of the battlefield.

70 Replete with hair, flesh and bones – that warrior attains the supreme felicity. Who kills a general, climbs into his chariot,

71 – That warrior has the valour of Viṣṇu and the intelligence of *prabhu* Bṛhaspati. A general, or a general's son, or any pūjā- respected enemy leader –

72 A warrior who captures any of these attains my very own heaven. Never grieve the loss of a hero who dies in battle.

73 He is not to be mourned. He enjoys the bliss of heaven. No food or drink oblations for him; he needs no purifying bath.

74 I will tell you what worlds he attains. Thousands of the loveliest *apsarās* rush to the hero slain in battle

75 And beseech him, "Be my husband, be my provider." Blessed is his tapasyā; it is Sanātana Dharma itself;

76 The warrior who follows battle-dharma observes the four āśramas of life. Old men, children, women and fleeing soldiers are not to be killed,

77 Nor one who surrenders, placing grass in his mouth as a sign; nor one who says, "I am yours." Jambha, Vṛtra, Bala, Pāka, hundred-māyā-maker Virocana,

78 Hard-to-defeat Namuci, māyā-maker Śambara, the Daitya Vipracitti, Danu's sons, Prahlāda – I killed them and became the lord-god.

79 Accepting Śakra-Indra's words (said Bhīṣma), Ambarīṣa realised how soldiers succeed in war.

SECTION NINETY-NINE

1 There is an historical story connected with this, (said Bhīṣma) the story of the battle between Pratardana and the ruler of Mithilā.

2 Let me tell you all about it. The ruler of Mithilā was named Janaka. Wearing the sacred thread for making war, *yajñopavīti* Janaka suceeded, O Yudhiṣṭhira, in inspiring his soldiers to do battle.

3 Rājā Janaka of Mithila was a mahātmā well-versed in the ways of the world. What he presented before his soldiers were visions of heaven and hell:

4 "Look at these resplendent worlds reserved for those who fight fearlessly! Replete with Gandharva virgins, they fulfil all your kāma-desires. They satisfy endlessly.

5 And there, on the other side, is hell, for those who flee battle, bringing eternal shame for all who enter it.

6 See them. Know them. And fight to win! Save yourselves from this horrible hell.

7 The supreme door of heaven is for those who perish fighting on the field." O Puraṁdara-Yudhiṣṭhira! Inspiring his soldiers, the king

8 Made them defeat his enemies, and bring joy to that lord of men. A king must always be firm and self-confident.

9 In the middle of the elephant ranks must be stationed the chariot-heroes, behind the chariot-heroes the cavalry, and the well-armed foot-soldiers behind the cavalry.

10 A rājā who devises his strategy in this way is sure to win. You, Yudhiṣṭhira, should learn from this.

11 Those who seek heaven by fighting well should be like *makara*-whales churning the ocean, and churn the battlefield similarly.

12 They should encourage each other, and re-inspire faith in the dispirited. Guard the territory won, do not over-chase a fleeing enemy.

13 Routed reckless warriors fleeing for their lives can be very dangerous, O rājā, for which reason they should not be over-zealously pursued.

14 Brave warriors who are running away should not be ruthlessly attacked. Never pursue them over too long a distance.

15 Unmoving creatures are food for the unmoving, toothless creatures are food for those who have teeth, water is food for the thirsty, the coward is food for the hero.

16 The backs and bellies
and hands and feet
of coward and hero
are the same, yet the coward
kneels and does *añjali*
in front of the hero.

17 The entire world, like a son before a father, depends on the strength of a muscular hero, which is why heroes must always be specially honoured.

18 There is nothing superior to heroism in the three worlds. The hero protects everything, and everything depends on the hero.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED

1 "O bull-brave Bharata! Pitāmaha!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "Tell me how those who lead armies can go about winning battles, even if it involves going a little against the rules of dharma."

2 Bhīṣma replied: Dharma can be based on truth, it can be based on reason, it can be good and decent conduct, it can be whatever is convenient.

3 Let me first deal with practical dharma, that which leads to the dharma of material success, known as artha. Robbers and barbarians transgress traditional norms and values.

4 A sacred Āgama Vedic text explains how to deal with them. Listen to me as I clarify how you can successfully discharge your duties.

5 O Bharata descendant! Wisdom is of two kinds: simple, straight; complex, crooked. Know well the crooked, but don't practise it too often.

6 Use crooked wisdom to avert possible harm from a mischief-maker posing as a friend of the rājā but out to sow discord in the kingdom.

7 O Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira! Elephant-hides, cow-hides and bull-hides, sharp thorn-like iron spikes on leather-mail make excellent body-armour;

8 Yak-tails, polished shining war-weapons, red and yellow coats of mail, multi-coloured flags and pennants;

9 *Ṛṣṭi*-double-edged swords, *tomara*-lances, plain swords, sharp parasu-axes, *phalaka*-shields and other shields – there should be always a plentiful stock of these.

10 Supplied with excellent weapons, and inspired to wage war, it is recommended that the army start operations in Caitra or Mārgaśīrṣa,

11 Because that is when the crops ripen, and water is plentifully available. And, O Bharata, the weather is neither too hot nor too cold.

12 It's the perfect time for an offensive. Also perfect is any time when the enemy is facing difficulties, for whatever reason.

13 Best is a level, easily passable road, grassy and well provided with water. Spies who know about woods and forests should be sent ahead as scouts.

14 Men are not forest-creatures, so a king who is eager for victory should ensure that his army marches on satisfactory roads.

15 The army's front rank must consist of valiant highborn warriors. Recommended as camping site is a high-walled, water-surrounded fort.

16 It must be well secured against a surprise attack by the enemy. Those who are expert in the guṇas of warfare say that an open-to-the-sky

17 Camp-site is far inferior to a clearing in a forest. A forest-clearing is indeed the best place to pitch a camp.

18 Such a camp is ideal for concealing fost-soldiers, and in case of an attack, it provides an excellent avenue for retreat as well as refuge.

19 Let the warriors keep the seven-star Saptarṣi constellation behind them, and make themselves as unmoving as mountains when they go on an offensive to overcome a formidable enemy.

20 Wind, Sun, and the planet Śukra favouring, one may win a war. Each is successively superior, Yudhiṣṭhira, but all three together is ideal.

21 Those familiar with the ways of war recommend, for cavalry operations, a terrain that is not muddy or water-logged, not uneven, not boulder-strewn.

22 Flat, open territory, unmuddy unpitted, is ideal for chariot-warriors; small trees, mahā-bushes and watery slush are ideal for elephants.

23 Ideal for foot-soldiers is territory hard to access, thick with mahā-bushes, clustered with came and bamboo growth, mountains and forested.

24 O Bharata descendant! A multitude of foot-soldier makes an adamantine army. A multitude of chariots and cavalry is ideal for warfare on clear, sunny days.

25 Recommended for rainy days are foot-soldiers and elephants. Keeping these guṇas in mind, a king should think of the best time and place.

26 That done, pūjā-favoured by the stars and the lunar day tithi, victory will surely be his. Sleeping, thirsty, exhausted and panic-stricken soldiers must not be attacked;

27 Not the mokṣa-yearner, one eating or drinking, the weak, traumatised, dishevelled, wounded;

28 One sitting still, doing unmilitary work, one who has left the camp on an errand, or one running fearfully towards the camp;

29 Or those who serve at the gates of the king and his ministers, those who do the work of menials, and those who are in charge of such menials.

30 Warriors who smash the enemy ranks, and rally their own demoralised soldiers, should be given the same food that a king eats, and their salary should be increased tenfold.

31 Some such heroes should be given command of ten soldiers, some of a hundred, and others of a thousand soldiers.

32 Then, ordering an assembly of these, the king should make them pledge, "We vow to win the war. We will never betray our fellow-warriors.

33 Those who are afraid, are free to leave, now! All those leave, who cannot rout our enemies in battle, and so make our leaders vulnerable.

34 Those who have doubts, let them leave. They are not good enough for enemy-slaughter. Only the brave warrior kills his foes and protects his comrades in battle.

35 The fleeing warrior loses not only his wealth, he faces execution, infamy, shame. Ugly words are spread about his character.

36 The blubbering, toothless soldier, the traitor who discards his weapons – that soldier belongs to our enemy, he is not one of us.

37 Less than human are those who turn their backs on the battlefield. They only add to soldier numbers. This world is not for them, nor the next.

38 *Tāta*, my child, enemies will delightedly praise a deserter fleeing from battle, just as friends will extol a warrior who is victorious.

39 The agony of a warrior who fame has been tarnished by his enemies is a pain worse than death itself.

40 Keep this well in mind – victory is the root of dharma and every possible happiness. Death which cowards fear most is what delights heroes most.

41 Decide, therefore: We seek heaven, we will lay down our lives in battle. Either we win or we die, and dying we attain the supreme goal.

42 Who takes this vow, and is ready to give up this life – that is the fearless warrior who will pierce the ranks of the enemy.

43 Swordsmen armed with swords and shields should form the army's front rank. Ox-driven carriages form the rear, and others in the centre.

44 The elderly should be in the rear, to encourage and inspire the soldiers who are ready to destroy the enemy forces.

45 Brave veteran warriors, skilled in the art of waging war, are placed in front, and others comprise the rear as their followers.

46 Even the timid and fearful should be inspired with encouraging words, or they will become useless hangers-on.

47 Even a few can make a fine fighting unit. The needle-point strategy is excellent if a few decide to attack many.

48 Vulnerable or impregnable, true or otherwise, whatever the state of your soldiers, remember to wave your hands and shout: "They are finished! Our foes are finished!

49 Our enemy is on the run! Our allies are coming with reinforcements! Fight fearlessly!" And then let them scream their war-cries and pounce on the enemy.

50 Let the front rankers charge, beating *krakacas*, cow-horns, *bheri*-drums, *mṛdaṅga*-drums and *paṇava*-drums and other instruments.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED ONE

1 "O descendant of Bharata!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "How do warriors poised for battle behave? Their nature, their looks, their body-armour, their weapons? Tell me about them."

2 Weapons and vehicles (replied Bhīṣma) are made following already prepared designs. The behaviour of brave men also is patterned on traditional lines.

3 Gāndhāras, Sindhus, and Sauvīras fight with *nakhara*-claws and *prāsa*-spears; they are strong and fearless; they stand out prominently as warriors.

4 Strong also and well-versed in war-weapons are the Uśīnaras. Easterners are brilliant elephant-warriors – and brilliant in deceptions.

5 The Yavanas, Kāmbojas and dwellers in the region of Mathurā are brilliant in hand-to-hand combat. The Southerners are fine swordsmen.

6 It goes without saying that mahā-powerful and mahā-courageous men can be found in every country. I have given you the broad idea. Now let me come to the specifics.

7 Voice and eyes like those of lions and tigers, like lions and tigers their gait, eyes like those of pigeons and sparrows – these are brave routers of enemies.

8 Deer-voiced, bull-eyed or tiger-eyed – these are agile, reckless and foolish. *Kiṅkiṇī*-bell-voiced warriors are given to fierce bursts of anger.

9 Cloud-roaring-voiced, angry-looking, camel-bodied, curve-nosed and hook-tongued – these can run very fast, and hurl missiles at long distances.

10 Cat-like bodies, thin hair and delicate skin – these can hurl weapons at far distances; they are volatile and near-invincible.

11 Eyes blinking like those of lizards, gentle-natured, gait like a horse's gallop – these are wrathful and aggressive types who revel in warfare.

12 Deep-set, bulging eyes, pink eyes, frowning eyes, mongoose eyes – these are valiant warriors, ready to sacrifice their lives in battle.

13 Sharp eyes, broad forehead, pinched face, thunderbolt-arms, *cakra*-marked fingers, lean figure, nerve-lines showing, –

14 These are expert in penetrating the ranks of the enemy; they are like musth elephants when attacking the enemy forces.

15 Curly, reddish hair, well-fleshed cheeks and jowls, powerful heavy shoulders, massive thighs, fierce-looking,

16 Sturdy like a horse of the Sugrīva breed, or like Vinatā's son Garuḍa, round-headed and huge-faced, with a face resembling a cat's,

17 Shrill-voiced, proud and hot-tempered, roaring when fighting – these have no idea of dharma, they are conceited, and truly horrible to look at.

18 These warriors have given up their ātmans, they will fight to die, they will never retreat. They are the front-line soldiers – they will kill or be killed.

19 They are men of adharma, they violate all norms of decency. They need to be pacified, because their violent anger can break out even against the rājā himself.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWO

1 "O bull-brave Bharata!" Yudhiṣṭhira asked. "What are the signs by which one can tell that an army will be victorious? This I would like to know."

2 O bull-brave Bharata! (replied Bhīṣma) Let me give you in detail the signs by which one can tell how an army can be victorious.

3 Cosmic Time Kāla urges men on to their *daiva*-destiny. Those who see with the insight of divine knowledge understand this.

4 Those who understand this do *prāyaścitta*-expiation in advance by performing *japa* and *homa* rituals and other auspicious rites to ward off the impending ills.

5 O descendant of Bharata! If an army's soldiers, and its animals, are charged with aggressive energy, victory is assured.

6 With winds blowing from behind it, and rainbows appearing, and clouds showering rain from behind, and sunlight as well,

7 And jackals and wild crows and vultures trailing it – that army is certain to succeed superlatively.

8 When the sacred fire
is a blaze of radiance
with smokeless flames uprising
swirling to the south,
and fragrant are the offerings –
these are signs of victory.

9 When the mahā-resonant
blowing of conches
and roaring of kettledrums
inspires the warriors
to fight furiously –
these are signs of victory.

10 If animals are kept
to the left or behind
before attacking, it's auspicious;
when attacking, to the right
brings success; and failure
when kept in front.

11 When the calls of birds
who have auspicious voices –
such as *haṁsa*-swans and cranes
and woodpeckers and bluejays
stir the hearts of warriors –
these are signs of victory.

12 When the faces of soldiers
shine with the lustre
of weapons and armour
and war-flags so dazzling
that their foes are blinded –
then the enemy is routed.

13 When the warriors are loyal
to their leaders, and free
from *abhimān* self-conceit,
and mutually trusting,
and champions of fair play –
these are signs of victory.

14 And the face of victory is seen when heart-pleasing sounds and touches and smells spreading everywhere increase the fortitude of warriors.

15 Favour-giving is the left side of a warrior locked in a battle, the right entering a battle; what is behind him brings success, what is in front of him spells danger.

16 Even with a mahā-fourfold army, you must first, Yudhiṣṭhira, seek success by reconciliation.

17 O Bharata descendant! Remember: victory depends on fate or pure chance; grossly inferior is any victory that war brings.

18 A mahā-army routed is like a mahā-herd of deer in panic, like an ocean in a flooding fury of mahā-overflowing.

19 No matter how many brave warriors are in it, a panicking army cannot be saved. A few flee, and the rest shout, "We are finished!"

20 It can happen that just fifty fanatic comrades, brimming with confidence, reckless of life, with do-or-die bravery can win a battle.

21 Five, six, or seven highborn warriors, pūjā-respected by all, and determined to fight, can completely conquer an enemy army.

22 Fight only if all else has failed. First try conciliation; try sowing dissension; try gift-giving. War is the last resort.

23 A surprise enemy attack haunts the timid and fearful. To them a pre-emptive strike is like a lightning bolt: on whom will it fall?

24 When soldiers rush out to block an army of aggressors, their bodies tremble. They shiver, their enemies shiver, the land shivers.

25 Indeed, O rājā, the body of the entire realm shivers. The very marrow of the bodies of warriors mangled by weapons of war dries up.

26 That is why, along with shows of force, conciliation must be tried again and again. A brutalised enemy will try war again.

27 Secret agents should be sent on missions of sowing dissension among one's enemies. Peace with a rājā stronger than oneself is a must.

28 Unless this is done, how can an enemy be kept in check? He will ally with one's foes, and become impossible to contain.

29 Pardoning is the māyā-device used by those who are good, not by those who are not good. Let me explain, Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira, when one should pardon, and when not.

30 Great is the glory of a victorious pardoning rājā. Even mahā-hostile and guilty enemies start trusting him.

31 The antigod Śambara says, "Crush your enemy first before you pardon him. To bend a stick of wood, heat it properly, or it will remain as it is."

32 Ācāryas do not approve of this, because this heating does not look good. Check your foes without cruelty, they say, without destroying them, as you would your own children.

33 A cruel rājā, Yudhiṣṭhira, is hated by his subjects, a gentle rājā disapproved. So be a mix of both.

34 O descendant of Bharata! Before attacking, and while attacking, an enemy, speak sweet words. After attacking, grieve, even shed a few tears,

35 And inform your enemy: "So many killed – so many – by my soldiers! I told them not to, again and again! But they did not listen!

36 Aho! Everyone wants to live! Why should anyone be ordered killed? Very hard to find are excellent men who do not flee from battle.

37 Any soldier of mine who has killed such a person has displeased me." Having said this in front of his enemy, the king in secret should pūjā-respect the killers.

38 To honour the killers, he should hold their hands, regret the wounds suffered by them, console them, and even weep in sympathy.

39 Whatever the situation, the goal is conciliation. A wise-in-dharma king who does this is loved by all, and fears none.

40 O descendant of Bharata! All people then trust him. On the basis of that trust, he can do what he likes, and enjoy himself.

41 A rājā who desires to enjoy this world must build that trust and protect the earth without using māyā-trickeries.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THREE

1 "Earth-lord Pitāmaha!" asked Yudhiṣṭhira "How does a king deal with a mild, a fierce, and a many-allied enemy?"

2 Bhīṣma replied: In this connection, Yudhiṣṭhira, there is an ancient historical story of a conversation between Bṛhaspati and Indra.

3 Once the slayer-of-super-heroes and lord-of-the-gods Vāsava-Indra went to Bṛahaspati and, hands folded in *añjali*, asked:

4 "Brahmin, how should I go about dealing with my enemies faultlessly? How do I get to control them without destroying them?

5 The usual way is to wage a war and win a victory. But what should I do so that the radiant goddess of prosperity Śrī never leaves me?"

6 Brilliantly-learned-in-dharma-artha-and-kāma and wise-in-the-ways-of-rāja-dharma Bṛhaspati replied to the demolisher-of-cities Puraṁdara-Indra:

7 "Never resort to violence if you want to control an enemy. Only the hot-headed and impatient use violence, like foolish children.

8 If you want to kill an enemy, don't tell him you are his enemy. Keep your feelings of anger and fear and delight to yourself.

9 However much you distrust him, give your enemy the impression you have full faith in him. Always sweet words – never say anything that displeases him.

10 No point in fruitless bitterness, in pointless bad-mouthing. Like a bird-catcher who knows how to trap birds carefully, gracefully,

11 O Puraṁdara-Indra, an earth-lord makes sweet sounds to lure his enemies, trap them, and then kill them.

12 O Vāsava-Indra! Conquering an enemy does not make one sleep easy. A wicked-ātmaned enemy flames up again like smouldering rubbish.

13 *Prabhu* lord! There is no such thing as a total victory. Once victory is won, and the enemy subdued, he should be diplomatically dealt with.

14 Unaffected by his enemy's refusal to accept a humiliating defeat, a king should consult with his mantra-knowing mahātmā ministers,

15 And attack his enemy again, at the right time, when his enemy is unprepared and stumbling, or sow dissension in his enemy's ranks by despatching trusted secret agents.

16 Learning everything – beginning, middle and end – about his foe, after getting definite proof, he should disrupt the enemy's army

17 Be getting agents to infiltrate it, by offering bribes, by using poisons and drugs. But never should he fraternise with his enemy.

18 He should bide his time, and attack only at the opportune moment, when the enemy least suspects it, and wipe out his foe for ever.

19 He should never attack on impulse. A victory needs to be carefully planned. There is no need to use bitter and hurtful words.

20 O Devendra-Indra! There is always the one right, perfect time to exterminate an enemy. Seize that time – and strike! It may never come again, despite all your waiting.

21 Increase your army's strength; get more allies. Don't provoke your enemy, but when the time is ripe, don't delay attacking him.

22 Cast off kāma, anger, and *ahaṁkāra* self-importance, and take advantage of all the weaknesses of those you despise as foes.

23 Surottama Śakra-Indra! O finest of the gods! Gentleness, harshness, laziness, carelessness, and multi-māyā-deceptions are the bane of kings who do not know how to discriminate.

24 If these four are overcome, and māyā-deceptions seen through, a king can safely and with confidence attack his enemy.

25 If a king can keep a secret, it is best he keep it to one man. Ministers are known to give out secrets; or discuss them freely among themselves.

26 Let him say, 'This is impossible,' and then let him involve others to make it possible. Let him use Brahmā-daṇḍa divine punishment against invisible enemies by invoking the aid of priests, and employ his four-fold army might against visible enemies within the reach of military chastisement.

27 But first a rājā must sow discord. After that, off and on, and at the right time, let him use the approrpriate chastisement, quietly.

28 Before a powerful enemy, lower your head and offer *praṇāma.* Attack swiftly and kill an unready enemy before he wakes up.

29 Offer *praṇāmas*, gifts and sweet words to your enemy, as if he were your friend. Never let him suspect what you are up to.

30 Stay away from all places that are near the places of suspicious enemies. A rājā should never be too near an enemy he has hurt or humiliated. Wide awake is such an enemy.

31 O finest of the gods! Lord of the immortals! Nothing is more difficult than governing a multi-peopled, multi-cultural kingdom.

32 It requires a ruler with special yoga-powers to balance out friends and foes in a multi-peopled multi-cultural kingdom.

33 A gentle ruler is mocked, and a harsh ruler is dreaded. Be neither gentle nor harsh; but do not be non-gentle and non-harsh either.

34 A careless king can ruin his kingdom, just as a strong ocean wave can breach a landfill and flood the countryside.

35 O sacker-of-cities Puraṁdara-Indra! Never attack too many enemies simultaneously. Conciliation, gift-giving, sowing discord, punitive power –

36 These should be skilfully used one by one to deal with them. No intelligent king in his right senses attacks a host of enemies simultaneously.

37 When his massive army of elephants, horses, chariots and foot-soldiers and machines, and his six-fold army

38 Of elephants, horses, chariots, footsoldiers, treasury and wealthy merchants loyal to him is ready, and superior to his enemy, he should swiftly attack the *dasyu*-barbarians.

39 Not mildness, but the *upaniṣad* of force.
Mildness to an enemy is never praised.
Praised is an army attacking an enemy.
Damaging crops is never praised,
nor wanton destruction of any kind,
nor doing anything that is unnatural.

40 Sow māyā-deceptions and discords
in an enemy's urban and rural areas,
foster disaffection of all kinds –
but for the sake of his royal fame,
a king must not permit loot and plunder
and assassination and other wicked deeds.

41 O destroyer of Bala and Vṛtra!
A king must pursue his enemies
and appropriate the wealth of the cities
for his own pleasure and purposes,
but this must always be accomplished
in accordance with prescribed rules.

42 Secretly the rājā should reward
his own officers, but openly
he should declare their wealth confiscated;
then, despatching them to cities
of the defeated enemy, he should proclaim:
'You are punished for your misdeeds'.

43 Decide how to deal with your enemies
after consulting those who
are extremely learned in the śāstras,
who understand well the śāstras,
who are recognised as experts
in clarifying the commentaries."

44 "O finest of the twice-born!" said Indra. "What are the signs by which one can tell a wicked person? This is my question. Tell me."

45 "Wicked is he who discusses your faults behind your back," replied Bṛhaspati, "and is silent when others praise your virtues – and envious too.

46 Even by his silence can you know him. But he sighs heavy sighs, and bites his lips, and shakes his head, and changes the subject.

47 Hugely effusive in your presence, fault-finding in your absence, promising much and delivering little when confronted, are signs of wickedness.

48 He eats aloof, all by himself, and complains, 'This is not to my taste.' Whether he is sitting, or sleeping, or travelling, everything must be exactly as he wants it.

49 Pleased when you are pleased, suffering when you are suffering – is the way you can tell a friend. Exactly the opposite is the way you can make out an enemy.

50 O lord of the thirty gods Tridaśādhipa-Indra! Understand well the signs by which you can tell human character. Wicked persons have clear and powerful characteristics.

51 O finest of the gods! Lord of the immortals Amareśvara-Indra! This is the insight given to you in the śāstras. Understand it well."

52 Following the advice of Bṛhaspati
(said Bhīṣma), foe-destroying,
enemy-city-obliterating Puraṁdara-Indra
proceeded against his enemies
at the right time, and succeeded
in obtaining victory over them.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FOUR

1 Yudhiṣṭhira asked: "How should a dharma-abiding rājā conduct himself if he wants happiness, when he has no wealth, no army, an empty treasury, and ministers opposing him?"

2 Bhīṣma replied: In this matter, Yudhiṣṭhira, is often recited the historical story of Kṣemadarśī. In will tell you that story. Listen to me.

3 This happened long ago. It was said that prince Kṣemadarśī lost his powers and, facing near calamity, went to the muni Kālakavṛkṣīya and, revering him, said:

4 "O Brahmin, what should a man like me do, who deserves riches but, despite all efforts, fails to find a kingdom for himself?

5 O excellent one! What is left to me except suicide, stealing, seeking refuge with others, and similar demeaning deeds?

6 A wise-in-dharma-and-gratitude person like you is the ideal advisor for a man afflicted with mental or physical problems.

7 When a man turns away from physical pleasures, he transcends joy and grief, and attains the real wealth of wisdom.

8 I feel sorry for those whose happiness lies in worldly wealth. All my worldly wealth has vanished, like a fleeting dream.

9 Very difficult indeed it is to give up vast riches. Look at me! I am clinging to my wealth which is no longer with me.

10 Śrī the goddess of prosperity has left me. I am pathetic, I suffer. O Brahmin! Help me. Show me an alternative happiness."

11 Requested by the wise son of the rājā of Kosala, the mahā-radiant muni Kālakavṛkṣiya replied:

12 "You are a clear thinker. You sould act the way you think. Everything in this world is transitory. 'I' and 'mine' – all this is transitory.

13 You say about something, 'This is.' But, truly speaking, it is not. Realise this. The wise man overcomes all calamities in this way.

14 Whatever was or will be, neither was nor will be. When you grasp the truth of this, you will be free of all adharma.

15 All the vast wealth of the past has passed from one hand to another. Realise this, and be free of your feverish anxiety.

16 What once was, no more us. What was not, now is. What use is grieving? Grieving will not get you anything.

17 O rājā! Tell me: where is your father today? Where is your grandfather? You do not see them today, and they do not see you.

18 You who have an ātman – you too are impermanent. You see this; so why do you grieve for them? With your finer mind keep this in mind: one day you too will simply not be.

19 O king! I, you, your friends, your enemies will certainly die. Everything will cease to be.

20 Be they twenty years old now, or thirty years, before they reach a hundred all will die.

21 So be reasonable: even if you lose mahā-wealth, console your ātman saying, 'It was never mine.'

22
What is still in the future,
say, 'Not mine.'
What you had, and lost,
say, 'Not mine.'
Be a wise paṇḍit, say,
'Fate is all-powerful.'

23 There are people without wealth who govern kingdoms, people with intelligence and enterprise, people as good as you or better than you;

24 They do not whine and moan like you – so why are you grieving? Are you not better than they? Or at least their equal in intelligence and enterprise?"

25 "O twice-born one! Dvija!" said the rājā. "The way I see it, my kingdom came to me just like that, and Mahā-Kāla has taken it away just like that,

26 Like an engulfing flood. O tapasyā-rich one! I can see I have to survive on whatever I get."

27 "O prince of Kosala!" said the muni. "Face the truth – there is no point mourning the past or worrying about the future.

28 Your kāma-desire must be for what is attainable, not what is unattainable. Enjoy what you have, do not pine for what might come.

29 O prince of Kosala! One can enjoy only what one already has, what has already been provided. Śrī the goddess of prosperity has forsaken you – have you purified yourself and stopped grieving?

30 It's an ill-minded man who grumbles at what is left after he has lost vast riches, and blames the Creator for what he had earlier.

31 Worse, he brands as undeserving all who are favoured by Śrī. This becomes the prime cause of the envy that torments him.

32 O rājā! Many think *abhimān* self-importance and jealousy are manly feelings. Be free of such envy, O Kosala rājā!

33 Even if Śrī-prosperity deserts you, at least tolerate her favouring others. Worldly-wise people know how to enjoy Satī Lakṣmī the goddess of wealth even when she is favouring others.

34 People who hate others' Śrī-prosperity will find their own Sati-Lakṣmī-wealth gone. Dharma-abiding dedicated devotees of yoga-dharma give up material prosperity and even their own lives, their sons and grandsons if need be.

35 I have heard of auspicious Bharata of the dynasty of Svayambhuva Manu who renounced a vastly prosperous gem-rich kingdom in the distant past.

36 Many other resplendent kings also have been recorded as giving up affluent kingdoms and going to forests, subsisting on roots and fruits.

37 There these earth-rulers transcended the pains of mortifying *tapasyā*. Ordinary people, however, find this much too impossible for them, and never even try it out.

38 But you are a percipient person, yet you desire things you should not desire, and you suffer and grieve unnecessarily.

39 Steady yourself in your intelligence, and give up things which look useful but are useless because, in truth, even the useful are really useless.

40 Look at the colossal destruction caused by people who pursue useful wealth! Some think Śrī-prosperity equals never-ending happiness!

41 Others get so ecstatically immersed in Śrī-prosperity they can think of nothing better. Their energies get depraved, and they are doomed.

42 O prince of Kosala! When wealth laboriously acquired is lost, passionate enterprise crumbles, fresh initiative slackens. All wealth is transient; keep that in mind before you start acquiring it.

43 There are excellent men who, motivated by dharma, go beyond the ways of worldly wealth and seek happiness in the world beyond.

44 There are others who are so greedy for wealth that they will even give their lives for it. To them, wealth is the everything of life.

45 Look at these pathetic people! Look at their supreme folly! Their delusion makes them victims of their greed for transient riches!

46 Who is so attracted to things that become nothings, to life that ends in death, and togethernesses that end in separations?

47 It's one way or the other, O rājā: either wealth leaves the man, or the man leaves wealth. That being so, why get so feverishly upset over it?

48 Seeing others in trouble, a fool is happy thinking he is safe. Perilous is the peace of mind that comes from such thinking.

49 Others' friends, others' wealth disappears also. Think carefully, and realise that the plight of others can easily be your plight too.

50 Discipline, restrain and concentrate your senses, mind, and speech. There is none else who can do this to yourself but you.

51 You are enterprising and brave, and you are confidently wise. You should not grieve over what you have not got, or what is hard to get, or what is harmful, or illusory.

52 Why should you of all people delude yourself? You need little, you are not fickle, your heart is gentle, your mind firm, your senses well disciplined, you practise brahmacarya.

53 Why should you beg with a *kapālin* skull-bowl? Leave that to those who are cruel, criminal, corrupt and cowardly.

54 Retire to a mahā-forest, and live on roots and fruits. Restrain speech, discipline your mind and senses, be compassionate to all.

55 A paṇḍit like you is the ideal person to live in a forest like a long-tusked elephant delighting in the foliage-food of the forest.

56 Be like a placid, dried up mahā-lake. The wise man becomes calm, unruffled. I see perfect happiness for a man who lives like this.

57 O rājā! When Śrī is impossible, when there are no good counsellors, when fate oppresses you, is there any better way out?"

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIVE

1 "But, Kṣatriya," continued the muni, "if you still have manly prowess in you, I will suggest a plan to get you back your kingdom.

2 If you follow it, that will indeed be a real karma. Listen to me carefully. I'll give you the details.

3 If you follow it, vast riches can still be yours. You will get back your kingdom, and Śrī the goddess of prosperity will favour you again.

4 If this idea pleases you, O rājā, I will place it before you." "*Prabhu* lord," said the rājā, "please help me, *bhagavān*, with this plan.

5 May this meeting of ours not be in vain!" The muni replied: "Crush your pride, kāma, anger, delight, and fear.

6 And approach your enemy and *praṇāma* him with palms joined in *añjali*. Pay homage, with the deepest sincerity,

7 To the ruler of Videha, who is true to his word. He will certainly restore your riches to you. You will gain the trust of all, and become, as it were, his right hand.

8 You will start associating with honest men, untouched by vices. A person who disciplines his senses and abides by the *śāstras*

9 Soon rehabilitates himself, and gains the approval of people too. Receiving the respect of that Śrī-blessed, wise ruler,

10 Enjoying the trust of the people, and basking in mahā-favours, making new friends, and consulting with experienced ministers,

11 Destroy your enemy from within. Crack a *bilva*-fruit with a *bilva*-fruit. Or find an ally and with his help destroy your enemy.

12 Or get your enemy to indulge in luxuries not easily obtained – the good things of life – women, clothes, couches, comfortable seats, vehicles, expensive mansions,

13 Birds, animals, rasas and juices, and perfumes and fruits – and see to it that your enemy slowly destroys himself.

14 If the enemy objects, or shows no interest, be absolutely sure that your intentions are not in any way revealed to him.

15 Enjoy yourself to the full in the kingdom of your enemy. Be alert and seeming friendly like the dog, the crow and the deer, and destroy him with this friendship-dharma.

16 Get him started on impossible mahā-undertakings like damming rivers. Stir up powerful neighbours against him.

17 Exhaust his treasury with mahā-expensive enjoyments such as lavish gardens, seats and beds.

18 Flatter the Brahmins to organise yajñas and gift-givings. The Brahmins will be delighted with you, and gobble your enemy like wolves.

19 'Surely a holy man attains the supreme goal!' 'Such a man enjoys the finest felicity in heaven!'

20 O prince of Kosala! With his treasury drained, he will fall prey to his enemies. It matters little that he follows dharma or adharma; his enemies will profit from his depleted treasury.

21 Your enemy's agriculture, fruit-wealth and vegetable-wealth–ruin them surreptitiously. His enemies will be pleased. Say fate did it.

22 Believers in fate are easily ruined. Get him to perform the Viśvajit World-Conquest yajña and thereby ensure that he is financially crippled.

23 That done, make the effort of informing him of a mahā-personality, a holy person you know, a dependable man who knows yoga-dharma,

24 Who will then persuade your enemy to renounce worldly things. That failing, use poison and drugs to get rid of his elephants, horses and men.

25 All these are time-tested techniques of fraud and deception. A competent man can make good use of these to exterminate enemies."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIX

1 The rājā said: "Brahmin, I have no desire to use fraud and wickedness in my life. I will not resort to adharma even if it leads me to vast wealth.

2 *Bhagavan*! Revered one! I have avoided all deeds till now that will make people doubt my goodness. I have always sought the welfare of others.

3 I want to live in this world by practising the dharma of never harming others. I cannot do what you tell me, and it does not become you to give me such advice."

4 "Kṣatriya," replied the muni, "your words become you and your nature. You are gifted with a far and wide-seeing outlook.

5 I will work for the good of both of you, and build a bond between you so firm that it will be overlasting.

6 Your birth is in a noble family. You believe in never harming others. You are vastly learned. Who is there who would not like to appoint you as a counsellor in a kingdom?

7 You have faced calamity, lost a kingdom, and yet, O Kṣatriya, you wish to live your life without resorting to any kind of cruelty.

8 *Tāta*! My child! The ruler of Videha will be visiting me soon. I will advise him; he will certainly do what I tell him to do."

9 The muni summoned the Videha ruler and said to him: "This man comes from a family of rājās. I know his character inside out.

10 His ātman is as clean as a mirror; it shines like the moon in an autumn sky. I have tested him carefully. There is no defect in him.

11 You must make him your ally. Trust him as you trust me. No kingdom can be run even for three days without a minister.

12 High intelligence and courage are essential in a minister. O rājā! Note this well –these qualities together lead to success.

13 There is no greater need for dharmātmā rulers than such a minister. This prince is a veritable mahātmā. He walks the path of righteousness.

14 If, keeping dharma as your ideal, you give him due honour, he will be able to reduce all your enemies to humble submission.

15 If he decides to fight you in order to recover the lost kingdom of his father and grandfathers, well, that is his sva-dharma as a Kṣatriya that he is fulfilling.

16 And it will be your duty then to defeat him with a decisive victory. So, take my advice and make him yours without fighting him.

17 Give up thoughts of greed, and abide by dharma. Do not allow hate or passionate kāma to sway you from your sva-dharma.

18 *Tāta*! My child! No victory, no defeat, is ever permanent. Just as you enjoy others' wealth, allow others to enjoy your wealth.

19 *Tāta*! My child! Foresee for yourself both victory and defeat. If you leave nothing for others, you will have nothing left for yourself. That fear will haunt you."

20 After listening to the bull-brave Brahmin, the king offered him profound pūjā-respect, as he deserved, and said to him:

21 "Your words are the words of a mahā-wise, a mahā-learned man. What you say is meant for the welfare of both of us.

22 I will do exactly as you have advised me to do. It is the best advice I have had. There is no need for second thoughts."

23 The Videha king summoned the Kosala prince and said: "With the help of dharma and strategy I have conquered the world,

24 But you, O finest of earth-rulers, have won me with the excellent guṇas of your ātman. Do not think poorly of yourself, O noble one. Like one victorious, live with me.

25 I do not think poorly of your intelligence and your manly prowess. I have won, but, O noble one, be like one victorious and live with me.

26 O rājā! Receive my pūjā-respect, and accompany me to my house." Honouring the Brahmin with pūjā-respect, with mutual trust they went home.

27 Taking the Kosala prince with him, the Videha king offered him pūjā-respect with feet-washing, *arghya*-hospitality, and sweet-curd-and-milk-and-honey *madhuparka* homage.

28 He offered his daughter too, bedecked with gems. The highest dharma of rājās is: victory and defeat do not last for ever.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVEN

1 "O exterminator of foes! The dharma-abiding way of life of Brahmins, Kṣatriyas, Vaiśyas, Śūdras, their wealth, means of livelihood, and the fruits of their way of life;

2 The life-style of rājās, the royal treasury, the ways of filling the treasury, winning victories, the characteristics of ministers, how to increase the prosperity of people;

3 The six guṇa-limbs of a kingdom, the qualities of an army, how to recognise scoundrels, the characteristics of good people;

4 The characteristics of those who are like oneself, those who are inferior, and those superior; the promotion of a kingdom's progress;

5 The ways in which the under-privileged should be safeguarded; – on all these matters, O Bharata, you have explained to me what dharma has to say," said Yudhiṣṭhira.

6 "O most excellent of learned men! You have also sketched the character of a victory-seeking king. Enlighten me now about the common people,

7 O Bharata, how they are to progress, how avoid internal dissensions, how conquer enemies, how gather to themselves allies.

8 I find that *gaṇa*-gatherings of government tend to break up through inner tensions and conflicts. It is hard for them to keep secrets of plans and policies.

9 O foe-smiting earth-lord! I want to know in every detail how these break-ups can be prevented."

10 Bhīṣma replied: O best of the Bharatas! Ruler of men! Fierce greed and hostile anger are the two things that breed hatred in *gaṇa*-gatherings, in families, and lands ruled by rājās.

11 It begins with the avarice of one man, leading to anger in another. Both become so intent on wasting each other that mutual destruction is assured.

12 Countries employ spies, diplomacy, military might, annexation, conciliation, gift-giving and sabotage to create fear in and weaken their fellow-countries.

13 Gift-giving to large *gaṇa*-gatherings is the means of disuniting them. Disunity creates fear, and they become easy prey to their enemies.

14 People-ruled *gaṇa*-gatherings are vulnerable to such internal break-ups, and to take-overs by enemies. They must devotedly cherish their unity.

15 Their prosperity depends on individual enterprise encouraged and endorsed by collective authority. And outsiders then make special efforts to forge friendshps with these *gaṇa*-groups.

16 Progressive intellectuals praise *gaṇa*-groups. Ideally, individuals in these groups compete and co-operate, producing general well-being and happiness.

17 *Gaṇa*-gatherings espouse a legal system based on śāstras and dharma. They are meticulous is legal procedures, and consider all people as equal.

18 An ideal *gaṇa*-gathering people's rule will punish even sons and brothers, and show special favours to those who are well-educated and disciplined.

19 O mahā-muscled one! *Gaṇa*-gatherings prosper because they have elaborate espionage and secret service systems, and are always producing wealth to augment the treasury.

20 O king! *Gaṇa*-gatherings prosper because they honour intellectuals, heroes, the mahā-enterprising, and all who contribute to collective progress.

21 O excellent Bharata! Wealthy, heroic, well-versed in war-weapons and the śāstras, expert in overcoming misfortunes – are *gaṇa*-gathering citizens.

22 What makes them prey to enemies are anger, disunity, fear, harsh punishment, starving, imprisoning and executing excessively.

23 That is why, O earth-lord, you should honour the leaders of *gaṇa*-gathering people's governments. The journey of this world is in their hands.

24 O tormentor of foes! O Bharata! Not all are to be given access to secret plans – these must be restricted only to the leaders of the *gaṇa*.

25 Regular meetings of leaders are essential if *gaṇa* people's rule is to progress. Splits and defections and non-cooperation will seriously undermine the *gaṇa's* all-round development.

26 When the advice of elders is rejected, the quarrels and personality clashes of *gaṇa* leaders will ruin the familial togetherness.

27 Bickerings must be quelled. Unity will protect against foreign interference. O rājā! Fear from within is a fatal weakness.

28 Another sure sign that the end of *gaṇa*-rule is imminent is when its leaders stop speaking to each other, out of anger or greed or confusion. You may belong to the same family or race,

29 But you may not be the same in enterprise, intelligence, looks, and wealth. *Gaṇa*-groups succumb to enemies from disunity and neglect.

30 That is why they say that *gaṇa*-gathering people's governments find their mahā-security in forming *sangha*-federations.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHT

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said:
"Vast is the path of dharma, O Bharata,
and many-branching.
Which one single of these dharmas
would you recommend as ideal to follow?

2 Which do you think is the finest of all these so many dharmas? Which dharma brings the highest merit in this world and the next?"

3 Bhīṣma replied: According to me, pūjā-respect for one's father, mother and guru brings a person mahā-glory and the celestial realms.

4 *Tāta*! Yudhiṣṭhira my child! Dharma or adharma, any deed ordered by these pūjā-respected people is a duty that must be obeyed.

5 What they say is final. There is no alternative dharma. What they decide is dharma. That is that.

6 They are the three worlds. They are the three *āśramas* of one's life. They are the three Vedas. They are the three sacred fires of a yajña.

7 The father is the *gārhapatya* household-head fire, the mother the *dakṣiṇā* southern fire, the guru the *ahavaniya* sacred offering fire. These three are superior to all fires.

8 If you do not neglect these fires, you will gain the three worlds – this world by serving your father, the next world by serving your mother properly,

9 And the world of Brahmā by serving your guru as ordained by tradition. Therefore, O Bharata, attend as required to these three,

10 And acquire fame and merit and the supreme mahā-fruits of dharma. May you be blessed! Do not argue against them, do not eat before they do,

11 Or demean them. O excellent rājā! Fulfil their every need. For that supreme service, you will gain fame, merit, glory and the celestial realms.

12 Who respects these three, is respected by all the worlds. Who does not respect them, will find all the fruits of his deeds nullified.

13 O smiter of foes! He who demeans these three guru-elders has no place in this world or in the next world.

14 His glory does not shine in this world, nor does it shine in the next. Nor does any good promised to him in the next world reach him.

15 I have reverentially offered everything to these three, and it has come back to me increased a hundredfold and a thousandfold,

16 And so the three worlds shine for me brilliantly, Yudhiṣṭhira. An *ācārya* whose life is an example is superior to ten scholars of the sacred śruti-texts,

17 One *upādhyāya*-teacher excels ten *ācāryas*, one's father excels ten *upādhyāyas*, one's mother surpasses ten fathers, indeed surpasses the world itself.

18 There is no guru anywhere to equal a mother. But in my opinion, the glory of a guru excels that of a father and mother.

19 Father and mother, O Bharata, give birth to the body; they are here, both of them, concerned with physical birth.

20 But an *ācārya* creates another kind of birth, a divine awakening, never aging, never dying. No matter what their offence, a father and mother must never be killed.

21 A wrong-doing child is never a criminal to its parents, nor wrong-doing parents to a child. Gods and maharṣis approve of this dharma.

22 He is a boy's father and mother
who makes truth the boy's armour,
who teaches him the wisdom
of the Vedas, and removes untruth.
Because he does what he does,
he should never be harmed.

23 Those who receive a guru's wisdom
but do not respect him,
who are near him, but do not serve him
in thought, word and deed –
they are guilty of the crime
of killing a foetus.
Just as the guru loves his disciple,
the disciple must revere his guru.

24 Anyone desiring to receive the benefits of the ancient Dharma must honour and pūjā-respect his gurus, and share with them what possessions he has.

25 He who pleases his father pleases Prajāpati-Brahmā also. He who pleases his mother offers pūjā-respect to the earth-mother also.

26 He who pleases his *upādhyāya*-teacher offers pūjā-respect to Brahmins well. A guru is more deserving of pūjā-respect than one's father and mother.

27 Ṛṣis and gods and *pitṛs* are pleased when gurus are pūjā-respected, because gurus are more deserving of pūjā-respect than they.

28 Never is a guru deserving of contempt. Like a guru, one's father and mother are always to be respected.

29 Never blameworthy, they are never to be condemned. Gods and maharṣis are respected when gurus and parents are respected.

30 These who harm *upādhyāya*-teachers
and fathers and mothers
in thought, word and deed
are guilty of the crime
of killing a foetus –
than which is no greater wickedness.

31 When a legitimate adult son fails to support his father and mother, his crime equals that of killing a foetus – than which is no greater wickedness.

32 No expiation exists for a friend-betrayer, an ungrateful person, a woman-killer, a guru-killer–these four.

33 This teaching is of teachings the highest.
This teaching can be taken
as the essence of all dharmas.
This is what should be followed
in this world – this the duty
of all the world's people.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINE

1 "Bharata!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "O bull-brave Bharata! How should a person behave if he wants to be true to dharma? O learned one! This I would like to know. Enlighten me.

2 Truth and falsehood – these two straddle the world. O rājā! How does a man steady in dharma choose between them?

3 What is *satya*-truth, and what is *anṛta*-falsehood? And what is Sanātana Dharma? When should one speak the truth? When should one lie?"

4 Bhīṣma replied: O descendant of Bharata! It is good to tell the truth. There is nothing that excels truth. But let me tell you what is very difficult to understand in this world.

5 Where a lie does the good truth does (such as saving life), and truth does the ill a lie does (such as harming life), it is better to lie than to speak the truth.

6 Bewildered indeed is the fool who is unclear on the meaning of truth. That man alone knows the meaning of dharma who can tell what is truth and what is falsehood.

7 Even a low-minded man, a man of imperfect learning, or a man excessively cruel can acquire mahā-merit, like the hunter Balāka who killed the blind beast who was threatening to kill all creatures.

8 Is it not marvellous that a fool who cherishes dharma does an act of adharma and still manages to acquire mahā-merit, like Kauśika on the bank of the Gaṅgā?

9 It is very difficult to answer the question you have asked about adharma. Analysing dharma is a laborious task, and it is very hard to define it.

10 But this one can be sure of – discoursing on dharma must always be for the welfare of human beings, so dharma is what which promotes the welfare of people.

11 The root of the word "dharma" comes from that which "holds together, preserves", so surely dharma is whatever preserves and protects.

12 Dharma is preached to promote the doctrine of ahiṁsā, nonviolence to all life, so dharma is whatever promotes ahiṁsā.

13 Ahiṁsā, truth, absence of anger, *tapasyā*, gift-giving, self-control, clear thinking, absence of blame and envy and vindictiveness, serene conduct –

14 These, O most excelling Kaurava, have been said by Parameṣṭhin-Brahmā to make up dharma. God-above-all-gods Devadeva Brahmā says this is Sanātana Dharma. Whoever stands firm in this dharma is blessed with a vision of felicity.

15 Some say the revealed *śruti*-texts of the Vedas are dharma. Others strongly disagree. It is best not to side with either. The Vedas do not cover everything.

16 If a thief wants to know where the wealth of his would-be victim is hidden, there is no doubt at all that according to dharma he should not be told the truth.

17 If the wealthy man can be protected by keeping silent, then keep silent. If, however, by keeping silent, suspicion is roused in the thief's mind,

18 Then it is certainly best to speak a lie. If it is required to swear a vow in this matter, then swear the vow; this is not a crime.

19 Every effort must be made to prevent the wealth from falling in the thief's hands. The giver of wealth to a criminal is bound to suffer himself.

20 If a creditor demands body-service as payment for his loan, witnesses are bound to say the truth about the contract;

21 If they fail to do so, they are liars. When it comes to saving life, or during a marriage, a lie is permitted –

22 Or to protect wealth, or to promote dharma. But if a rascal goes about begging for funds in the name of dharma,

23 He should be severely punished for cheating. A hypocrite who, professing dharma, violates dharma,

24 Deserves a sentence of execution for his crime. That less-than-human rogue who transgresses dharma

25 And, giving up his sva-dharma, wishes to live a life of deceit and dishonesty – is a criminal who deserves to be executed.

26 That is the way of most criminals – the sole pursuit of riches. They are insufferable. They are the lowest of all. No one should eat with them.

27 Alienated from gods and humans, they are as if already dead. They are without yajñas, without tapasyā. Shun their company.

28 Repeat to them: "Worse than stealing others' riches is destroying your own life. Take refuge in dharma; find happiness in dharma."

29 The truth is that for such criminals there is no such thing as dharma. No blame attaches to anyone who kills such evil people,

30 Because he is killing those whose evil deeds have already destroyed them; he is killing the dead. Anyone is free to do this.

31 They live deceitfully, like the crow and the vulture. When they leave their bodies, they are reborn in crow and vulture yonis.

32 Do to others as others do to you –
this is the essence of dharma.
With the māyā-maker use māyā,
with the good-doer be good.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TEN

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "So many problems, so many afflictions of all kinds in this world. Tell me, Pitāmaha, is there any way human beings can overcome them?"

2 Bhīṣma replied: The twice-born – who follow the four *āśramas* of the life-style ordained for them with fully disciplined ātmans – can overcome them.

3 Those who do not adopt crooked ways, who lead a well regulated life, who are not obsessed to procure material things – can overcome them.

4 Those who do not retort harshly to criticism, who do not harm others though themselves harmed, who give more than they take – can overcome them.

5 Those who treat guests with deep respect, who overlook others' shortcomings, are not envious, and daily study the Vedas – can overcome them.

6 Those wise-in-dharma who revere and serve their father and mother, and do not sleep away their daytime – can overcome them.

7 Those who refrain from wrong-doing in thought, word and deed, and do not harm others – can overcome them.

8 A rājā who is unmoved by rajas-guṇa-passion and does not appropriate the wealth of affluent subjects, and arranges for the security of his kingdom – can overcome them.

9 Those who have intercourse with their faithful wives during the fertile period, and piously perform the *agnihotṛ* ritual – can overcome them.

10 Those brave warriors who regardless of life go and fight battles for the sake of dharma – can overcome them.

11 Those who speak the truth even at the risk of losing their life, and so set an example for all – can overcome them.

12 Those who do not make a show of good deeds, whose speech is pleasing, who wealth is well spent – can overcome them.

13 Brahmins who do not study what should not be studied, who are firm in tapasyā and rich in tapasyā – can overcome them.

14 Those who from their youth practise tapasyā and brahmacarya, who are *snātaka* novitiates vowed to study Veda-wisdom – can overcome them.

15 Those mahātmās who, firm in sattva-guṇa, have subdued their rajas-passions and tamas-torpor – can overcome them.

[XII:110:16-25]

16 Those whom others do not fear, and who do not fear others, who look upon the whole world as one with their ātman – can overcome them.

17 Bull-brave noble-minded men who are not pained seeing the Śrī-prosperity of others, who abstain from crudeness – can overcome them.

18 Those who namaskāra the gods, and are openminded to all dharmas, who cultivate śraddhā-faith and śānti-peace – can overcome them.

19 Those who do not seek honour for themselves, but seek to honour others, and namaskāra all who deserve respect – can overcome them.

20 Those who seek offspring and perform the śrāddha-rituals for their ancestors' spirits at the auspicious *tithi*-times with a pure mind – can overcome them.

21 Those who do not lose their temper, calm other people's tempers, and do not shout at their servants and menials – can overcome them.

22 Those who, from their birth, abstain from honey, meat and liquor can overcome them.

23 Those who eat to survive rather than enjoy, who have sex in order to procreate, who speak because truth needs speaking – can overcome them.

24 Those who are *bhakta*-devotees of Nārāyaṇa, the Lord of all creatures, the Beginning and End of the universe – can overcome them.

25 Padmaraktākṣa the Pink-Lotus-Eyed one
Pītavāsa the Ochre-Robed one
Mahā-bhuja the Mahā-armed one
Your friend and brother
Your companion and relative
Acyuta the Undecaying One

26 Govinda-Puruṣottama-Krishna
Prabhu Lord
Acintyātmā the Ineffable Ātman
Around whom the cosmos
Is wrapped like a skin

27 Finest-of-men Puruṣottama
He who is pleased to seek
The welfare of Jiṣṇu-Arjuna
He is the irresistible Vaikuṇṭha-dweller
(O bull-brave rājā Yudhiṣṭhira)

28 He is Hari-Nārāyaṇa
And those *bhaktas* who seek refuge in him
They are the ones
Who overcome life's trials and afflictions.

29 Those who surrender all their karma
To Kamalapatrākṣa Lotus-Eyed Krishna
With absolute selflessness –
They, O Bharata, are the ones
Who overcome life's afflictions.

30 Those who with yajñas namaskāra the true lord,
the Creator of the universe, Brahmā –
they overcome life's afflictions.

31 Those who revere
The Supreme Eternal Reality
Maheśvara the Mahā-Divinity
Whose glory is sung in varied *stotras*
By Viṣṇu and Indra and Śambhu-Śiva
And Loka-Pitāmaha Brahmā –
They are the ones who overcome
life's trials and afflictions.

32 Those who study this section
titled "Durgatitaraṇa"
and listen to it
and discuss it with Brahmins –
they are the ones
who overcome life's afflictions.

33 O defectless Yudhiṣṭhira! In brief have I given you this instruction, which helps a person overcome the afflictions of this life and the next.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED ELEVEN

1 "*Tāta*! Revered and loved one! There are men who look calm but are not really calm. Others do not look calm but are calm. How can we tell who is who?"

2 Bhīṣma replied: Regarding this, Yudhiṣṭhira, is an ancient historical story involving a tiger and a jackal. Listen to it carefully.

3 In the Śrī-resplendent city of Purikā lived a king named Paurika. A cruel, barbarous king, who took special delight in harming people.

4 But the time came when his cruelty had to end. He died, and because of his vicious karma he was reborn as a jackal.

5 He recalled his previous life, and he was filled with remorse, so much so that he refused to eat the meat people placed before him.

6 He refused to harm others, he spoke the truth, he was strict in observing vows. He subsisted on the fallen fruits of forest trees.

7 Very disciplined indeed was the life he led, munching leaves and washing them down with water, in keeping with his vow.

8 He made a cremation ground his lair, and he loved it, because he was born there. In fact, he would not live anywhere else.

9 His fellow-jackals did not like his clean and pure ways. Intolerable! So they tried to influence him, gently, to change.

10 “You live in this horrible cremation ground of our *pitṛ*-ancestors. You are so clean, so pure! Isn’t this a paradox?

11 Be like us. We will bring food for you. Give up this fetish of cleanliness, and eat what we bring. Eat the food jackals eat.”

12 He heard them out, and he replied to them, very sweetly, very gently, with not even the littlest touch of harshness:

13 “I do not go by birth. It’s good manners that make a family name. It’s the karma I choose that will make me famous.

14 Of course I live here – in this cremation ground. But see my *samādhi*! See how focused and dedicated I am! It’s your ātman that makes your karma; *āśramas* are not places of dharma.

15 You can live in an *āśrama* and kill a Brahmin, and you can live outside an *āśrama* and gift away a cow. Is the first not a crime? Is the second worthless?

16 The trouble with you is that you are wild eaters, food-guzzlers. You are so confused you don’t even see the three evils of gluttony.

17 Your life is pointless, it’s wrong, it goes against your own good, it is of no benefit here and hereafter. I don’t like it.”

18 A famous tiger heard this and, thinking the jackal to be a pure-minded paṇḍit, offered him pūjā-respect and appointed him his counsellor.

19 “O serene one!” he said. “I admire you. Come with me, and let us together enjoy what the world has in store specially for us.

20 But let me caution you. We are both known to be fierce. So it’s best if we go about giving the impression that we are gentle creatures.”

21 The jackal offered proper pūjā-respect to the Indra-among-animals, the mahātmā tiger. Bowing his head, he said courteously:

22 "Mṛga-rāja! Rāja of animals! Your words suit me perfectly, since you are looking for someone to help you in dharma and artha.

23 O brave one! Without a counsellor how can you rule this mahā-forest kingdom? And not a counsellor, mind you, so corrupt that he will suck you dry for his own benefit.

24 An assistant loyal to you, with no selfish motives, who can cooperate with others easily, eager to win victories for your sake,

25 Who sees through trickery, devoted to his master's welfare, a clear thinker – O mahā-fortune-favoured one, you need an *ācārya* like that to pūjā-respect as you do your own father.

26 O lord of beasts! Nothing pleases me more than simple contentment. I have no desire for pleasure and luxury and power such as yours.

27 I will not be able to get along with the followers you have. They are bound to speak to you against me behind my back.

28 You are the refuge and provider of so many brilliant people. You are supremely fortune-favoured, you are not harsh even with the wicked.

29 You have foresight, you are mahā-energetic, straight-dealing, mahā-powerful, grateful, generous, successful, blessed and adorned.

30 As for me, O lord of the forest, I am perfectly happy as I am, though the way I live is difficult. I wander where I please in the forest. I am no one's servant.

31 Those who serve rājās have to face royal wrath. But living in a forest means not depending on anyone, no fear, no interference.

32 The fear of being summoned by a king – no such fear in the heart of a free forest-dweller who lives on roots and shoots and fruits!

33 On the one hand, easy food and water – and on the other, a world of fear! It's easy to see where happiness lies.

34 Many more servants are punished by these royal earth-lords for trumped-up charges than for real offences.

35 But let me say this: If the Indra-of-beasts still wants me, I am ready, but on one condition, which is about how you must treat me.

36 You must listen to whatever I say, because I wish you well. You must promise me – and you must keep your promise, to the letter.

37 I will never seek advice from your other ministers. They are far too clever in statecraft, and they will start making insinuations against me; I know this.

38 I will always meet you alone, one to one, and tell you what is good for you. You will not discuss the affairs of your ministers with me.

39 Also, after our talks together, no matter what, you will not take action against any minister. And, even if angry, you will not punish me."

40 The Indra-of-beasts said, "So be it," and gave the jackal pūjā-respect. And so the jackal was appointed the tiger's special adviser.

41 Excellent was the jackal's work, and highly pūjā-praised was he. So much so that the entire lot of other ministers and advisers – a familial group – resented his special status.

42 They hated him, but tried to influence him into joining them, saying they were his friends and wouldn't he like to help them out?

43 So far they had had a wonderful time, appropriating and living off the wealth of others, without this stumbling block of a jackal.

44 What stories they told him to win him over! They wheedled and cajoled, and tempted him with the most delicious bribes.

45 But he was a shrewd one, this jackal, and he would not give in. So they joined hands, and decided – well – to eliminate him.

46 That Indra-of-beasts, the lion was a voracious meat-eater. One day they quietly made off with his chunk of meat, and placed it in the house of the jackal.

47 Who planned it, who stole the meat, who placed it in his house – the jackal got wind of it all. But he kept silent.

48 He had an agreement with the lion: "Rājā, I am your adviser. If you want my friendship, you must never, never mistrust me."

49 In the meantime (continued Bhīṣma), the Indra-of-beasts woke up, hungry; he looked around, and saw no meat in front of him.

50 "Who's stolen my meat?" roared the rājā-of-animals. "Find the thief!" The culprits said to the Indra-of-beasts:

51 "Your learned adviser, so wise, so proud – he has taken it." The lion was appalled and infuriated by the jackal's treachery.

52 Intolerable! The rājā decided to sentence the jackel to death. Here was the chance the other ministers had been waiting for.

53 Saying to themselves, "He was going to take our jobs away from us – now we'll show him!", they explained to the lion:

54 "If he can stoop to such wicked karma as this, what is left that he will not do? Swāmī, lord, master, he is not what he says.

55 He says he is rooted in dharma, but his nature is wicked. Seeming man of dharma, but deep down a criminal. He's not what he seems.

56 All those vows he took – for what? To fill his stomach, that's why. If you don't believe us, we'll prove it. We'll get the meat from his house. See for yourself."

57 No sooner said than done. The meant was brought. With the meat matter unravelled before the lion, the result was as expected. The lion

58 Ordered the immediate execution of the guilty jackal. When news of the royal order reached the ears of the lion's mother,

59 She went to the rājā of animals and, wishing his welfare, cautioned: "Son, I smell something dirty here. Don't trust everything you hear.

60 This is all a trick by jealous crooked colleagues of a dedicated honet worker. They are out to destroy an innocent man.

61 No matter how clean a man is, people will find fault within him and accuse him. Even a muni in a forest, a reluse doing his own thing,

62 Becomes the target of friends and foes and strangers – these three. The greedy hate the thrifty, the timid hate the bold,

63 The fool hates the paṇḍit, the poor hate the mahā-rich, followers of dharma hate followers of adharma, the ugly hate the handsome.

64 And there are many learned paṇḍits too who are stupid and greedy and given to māyā-trickery – they will even run down a man as fault-free as Bṛhaspati himself.

65 Here is meat stolen when you were sound asleep – and there is the jackal who does not touch meat even when it is offered to him.

66 Good people sometimes seem to be wicked, and the wicked seem to be good. There can be many reasons for this. First find out why.

67 The sky looks like a flat-bottomed pot. In a firefly, where is the fire? But the sky has no bottom, and the firefly has no fire.

68 Don't trust what your eyes see. Investigate it fully. Only after that, decide and order, and you will not regret what you do.

69 My son, it is all too easy to rush to a decision. But the true glory of the great and the powerful is patience.

70 My son, it was you who chose him as adviser. He has become famous. He is a conscientious worker. Such men are hard to come by. He has, indeed, become your friend.

71 A king who punishes an adviser who has been falsely accused, will find himself ruined by his scheming ministers in no time."

72 Then it so happened that one among the wickedly conspiring ministers – a real dharmātmā! – came forward and exposed their deceit.

73 And when the truth came to light, the jackal was vindicated and freed – and the Indra-of-beasts embraced him warmly.

74 The jackal, however, smarting with insult, and abiding by Nīti-śāstra, declared that he would undertake the *prāya* fast to the death.

75 But the lion, his eyes moist with regard and affection, prevented him, offering his deepest pūjā-respet to the dharma-dedicated jackal.

76 The jackal saw the affection surging in the lion's heart. *Praṇāma-ing*the lion, with a voice choking with gratitude, he said:

77 "First you give me pūjā-respect; then you insult me; then you turn me over to my enemies. I am no longer worthy of you.

78 The discounted, the dismissed from authority, those whose honour is suspect, those who have fallen from favour because of charges levelled against them by their enemies,

79 The utterly powerless, the greedy, the cruel, the wrathful, the fearful, the penurious, the proud, the unemployed, the mahā-ambitious,

80 The exploited and tormented, those who always fear difficulties and problems, those who live in hiding, those who are self-seeking – all these are taken advantage of by one's enemies.

81 You have dismissed me, and condemned me. How will you ever trust me again? How can I ever be close to you again?

82 You said to yourself, 'He is dependable,' and you appointed me. You tested me. Then you broke your word, and you insulted me.

83 After I passed your test, you should have kept your word instead of insulting and humiliating me in public.

84 How can you trust me after insulting me? How can I trust you after getting insulted? How can lost confidence be ever restored?

85 You will always suspect me, and I will always fear you. Your enemies will exploit this. Once suspected, never trusted. Too many misgivings, and doubts and deceits.

86 Painful it is to unite what's broken, painful it is when what's united gets broken. Very little affection remains if love gets broken and united again and again.

87 Rare is the servant who thinks only of the welfare of his master. Self-seekers are many, very few those whose affection is selfless and pure.

88 And it is very difficult indeed to find a person who is responsible and dependable, because the minds of people are fickle, they swing this way and that. Out of hundreds, it is hard to find one who can be trusted completely.

89 Human success and human failure – who knows how and when it happens? Unpredictable is human nature: it glorifies and then demeans, it makes you mahā-great and then runs you down."

90 Consoling and comforting the rājā with these words of practical wisdom relating to dharma, kāma and artha, the jackal took permission to return to the forest.

91 The intelligent jackal refused the offer of the Indra-of-beasts and, sitting absorbed in his *prāya*-vow of fasting to death, he left his body and went to heaven.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWELVE

1 "What are the essential duties of a king," asked Yudhiṣṭhira, "whose performance will bring him happiness? You are the finest knower of all dharmas. Explain this to me fully."

2 Bhīṣma replied: Very well, then. Listen. There is one basic duty for a rājā which is sure to bring him happiness. This I will explain to you.

3 It is connected with a mahā-wonderful fable about a camel, a very popular story. A king must never do what was done in that fable. Listen to this, Yudhiṣṭhira.

4 There was this mahā-camel in the Prajāpat-yuga, the Satya-yuga, who could recall his past lives. Strict-vowed, he practised mahā-tapasyā in a forest.

5 Profoundly impressed was radiant Pitāmaha Brahmā when the tapasyā ended, so impressed that he offered to grant a boon to the camel.

6 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one!" said the camel. "Make my neck long enough to reach any food I fancy – a hundred *yojanas* long."

7 "*Evam-asti*! So be it!" said Granter-of-boons Mahātmā Brahmā. Pleased with his excellent gift, the camel ambled off to his forest.

8 He was a really silly-minded camel. The boon made him lazy. Fooled by Kāla, the idiot stopped making any effort to find food for himself.

9 After all, he had a neck a hundred *yojanas* long, so what was the point going out grazing. Everything was for easy picking. Then, one day, a mahā-storm!

10 To escape the storm, he shoved his head inside a cave. But what a thunderstorm it was! Rain fell in mahā-torrents, deluging the world.

11 To escape the downpour, a hungry and tired jackal, with his wife, rushed to the shelter of the cave. They were drenched to the bone, and shivering with cold.

12 That meat-eating jackal was so famished, O bull-brave Bharata, that he started nibbling at the juicy neck of the camel.

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13 When the camel realised what was going on, he tried his best to pull in his stuck neck. It was very painful, but what else could he do?

14 He tugged and he pulled and he jerked his neck right and left, but the jackal and his wife held on, munching the delicious flesh.

15 That was how the jackal finished off the camel. The storm ended, the rain ceased, and the jackal couple left the cave.

16 That is the story of how the camel died – that weak-minded beast. Laziness was the cause of his mahā-calamity.

17 It lies in your hands not to be lazy. Discipline your senses and keep working, keep busy. Remember the words of Manu: "The root of victory is will-power."

18 The best karma is the result of intelligent will-power. Second best is the karma of the muscle-power of the arms. And least is the karma of the legs, which have to bear all the weight.

19 The kingdom of a hard-working, sense-disciplined and skilful ruler flourishes. Remember Manu: "The root of victory is will-power."

20 Defectless Yudhiṣṭhira! The success in this world that is known as artha is achieved by those who listen privately to the advice of good counsellors, and implement it after they examine it. This earth belongs to such a ruler.

21 O you whose grandeur equals that of Indra! All this was narrated in the past by those who were proficient in the art of successful management. I have given you this śāstra, O rājā. Study it carefully, and learn from it.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTEEN

1 "O bull-brave Bharata," asked Yudhiṣṭhira, "how does a weak rājā of a hard-won kingdom deal with an enemy with powerful resources?"

2 Descendant of Bharata (replied Bhīṣma), in this connection is an ancient story of the conversation that took place between the ocean and the rivers – a history-story.

3 The eternal abode of the enemies of the gods, the ocean, the lord of all the rivers, once questioned the rivers about a problem that worried him.

4 "I find," he said, "that when there is a flood and you overflow, I see huge trees uprooted, branch and all, but never do I see reeds and rushes uprooted.

5 The reed is a thin, frail, almost bodiless thing, thriving on your banks. Do you spare it because you think it is useless, or is there something special about it?

6 Explain to me, all of you, what is it that makes you devour even the banks and leave unscathed the reeds."

7 It was the river Gaṅgā who replied to the lord of all rivers – in words filled with reason and excellently well-meant.

8 "The trees are stubborn creatures," Gaṅgā explained. "They stay where they are; you have to smash and uproot them. The reeds are different.

9 When they see flood-waters rushing at them, they bend, and swing back. The trees don't. The flood sweeps past, and the reeds remain.

10 The reed knows the time and the season. It is gentle, pliable. It swings with the current. That is how it manages to stay where it is. You cannot sweep it away in your swirling waters.

11 That is how they survive – all the trees, plants and creepers who sway with the wind and swing with the flood."

12 Which shows (continued Bhīṣma) that a king who does not swing in order to absorb the attack of a formidable enemy is inviting his doom.

13 Escaping doom is the king who acts after determining the strengths and weaknesses, and the power and valour of his enemy – and his own.

14 So, let a king choose the Way of the Reed when attacked by an enemy far stronger than him. This shows his wisdom.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FOURTEEN

1 "O chastiser of foes! Descendant of Bharata!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "What should be the conduct of a mild-mannered, cultured man who is publicly abused by an aggressive fool?"

2 O lord of the earth! (replied Bhīṣma). Listen to how this matter has been presented in song and chant. In this world, a man of culture has to learn to suffer the insolence of fools.

3 If he puts up with the fool's virulence, he gains the merits of his good deeds, and the demerits of his ill deeds become the property of his angry abuser.

4 Let him ignore the abuser, treating him like a tittering, nitpicking *ṭiṭṭibha*-bird. That fool will deserve and get everyone's disgust. His abuse is fruitless.

5 That fool will go on congratulating himself on his wickedness, saying, "See, how in that large gathering I said this and I said that to that very respected and eminent man –

6 And he just stood there, silent, like a corpse, dumb, stricken with shame." This is how a shameless fool praises himself while reviling others.

7 Ignore completely such a despicable rascal. The intelligent man has to learn to suffer the babbling fool.

8 What connection is there between praise and blame and his babbling? He's like a crow cawing without cause in a wilderness.

9 There might be a point in the abuse if the abuse were based on fact. But the man who goes in for slander has precious little respect for fact.

10 What he does, in fact, is expose himself. He's like a dancing peacock, feathers unfurled, and private parts revealed for everyone to see.

11 A good man will have nothing to do with a man who praises himself and who will stop at nothing – who will say anything he likes, and do anything he likes.

12 The man who sings your praises to your face, and stabs you in the back, is a wretched dog – neither does he prosper now, nor after death.

13 A hundred gift-givings, a hundred sacred yajñas will not redeem the backbiter. In one instant, he cancels all their merits.

14 The wise man shuns such a vicious criminal, like any good man refusing to eat dog-meat.

15 Like a cobra spreading its hood is the man with a wicked ātman who delights in finding fault with great men. He exposes his own faults.

16 Perilous is the position of a man who tries to clear himself of scandalous charges levelled against him by a seasoned backbiter. He is like a stupid donkey sinking deeper and deeper in a black heap of ashes.

17 The habitual scandalmonger should be shunned as one shuns an enraged wolf or a charging musth elephant or a rabid dog.

18 *Dhik*! Shame on that despicable man who has resolved to travel the path of the foolish and the fickle, who lacks humility and self-control, who is always stirring up trouble. He is your real enemy.

19 A good man who tries to face the scandalmonger and refute the charges needs to be advised: *Listen to him; don't get upset.* Sensible men with serene minds condemn such dialogues between a high person and a low person.

20 After all, a fool can easily break into anger and violence. He might strike you with the flat of his palm, or throw dust and chaff at you, or bare his teeth to frighten you. All this is well known.

21 A man who can patiently absorb the slanders of a public mischief-maker will never be the suffering victim of wicked words targeted at him, even by the worst of scoundrels. Neither will the man who reads the advice that is offered here and follows it.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTEEN

1 "O mahā-wise Pitāmaha!" said Yudhiṣṭhira "One mahā-doubt troubles me. O rājā, you must remove this doubt, you are the most respected one in our family.

2 *Tāta*! Respected elder! You have enlightened me on the behaviour of wicked-ātmaned people. It's in connection with this that I wish to get something clarified.

3 What is good for the kingdom, good for the family, what leads to the happiness of the family, what promotes progress now and in the future,

4 What benefits sons and grandsons, and ensures the kingdom's prosperity, the food and drink that is healthy for the body – tell me about these.

5 How does a consecrated rājā, firmly settled in his throne, surrounded by allies and well-meaning friends, go about making his subjects happy?

6 Swayed by unrealistic goals, by sentimentality and rāga-passion, unable to discipline his senses, for which reason he fails to discriminate between deserving and undeserving –

7 Such a rājā will find his retainers who come from noble families turning against him, and the prosperity they can provide will never be his.

8 You have the wisdom of Bṛhaspati himself. Remove my difficulty – give me that hard-to-find Rāja-dharma dealing with this problem.

9 O tiger-among-men! You delight in the welfare of our family. Mahā-wise Kṣattā-Vidura also always gives us helpful advice.

10 When I hear what you have to say about the welfare of our family and the kingdom, my happiness will be the happiness of a man who has tasted the *amṛta*-nectar of immortality.

11 Tell me, what should be the guṇa-qualities of a king's retainers? What should be the family background of an efficient retainer?

12 By himself a rājā cannot protect his kingdom. Yet it's also true that all men of high birth have the desire to rule a kingdom."

13 Bhīṣma replied: *Tāta*, dear one, Bharata, impossible for one man alone to rule a kingdom. Artha, material success, is never possible singly.

14 Even if you do succeed, O bull-brave Bharata, how will you protect your riches? You need assistants, you need servants, learned and practical,

15 Highborn, devoted to your welfare, and affectionate. Then you can enjoy the fruits of a kingdom.

16 They have to be well-born, these ministers and advisers, incorruptible, living with him, giving good counsel, skilled in forging human relationships,

17 Knowing how to prepare for the future, expert in the art of choosing the right time to act, never regretting what is over and done. Then can one enjoy the fruits of a kingdom.

18 When his joys become their joys, and his sorrows become their sorrows, when they seek to please him honestly by adding to the kingdom's prosperity, then are its fruits enjoyed.

19 That rājā deserves his kingdom whose subjects are not exploited and oppressed, who has high ideals, and treads the path of rectitude.

20 Excellent is that rājā whose treasury is in the charge of trustworthy officers who keep careful accounts, and see to it that the treasury is constantly augmented.

21 The royal treasury is a supreme asset only if it is in the hands of trustworthy officers, competent, incorruptible, and not greedy.

22 That king enjoys the fruits of dharma in whose kingdom justice is administered with perfect fairness, as in the case of Śaṅkha and Likhita, the sages who recommended karma-*phala*, proportionate punishment for the crime committed.

23 When a rājā abides by Rāja-dharma, he is worthy to receive and enjoy dharma-*phala*, the fruits of dharma. He is the self-controlled rājā who implements the six-fold policy.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTEEN

1 "O mahā excellent Bharata!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "What should an earth-lord do if he cannot find retainers who are highborn? Can he take the help of men who are not highborn?"

2 There is an ancient *itihāsa*-story (replied Bhīṣma) which will clarify this matter for you. A man with commonsense can learn a useful lesson from it.

3 I heard it in the *tapovana* forest-āshram of Jāmadagni-Paraśurāma, where it was narrated by a group of excellent ṛṣis.

4 There was a ṛṣi who lived in a forest, a totally unpeopled mahā-forest. This ṛṣi had his senses under complete control. He subsisted on roots and fruits.

5 After his *dīkṣā*-initiation, he disciplined himself further, studied the Vedas, purified himself by fasting, and conquered his senses so well that he attained serenity.

6 So serene was this wise and good man that the animals of the forest affectionately surrounded him wherever he sat –

7 Fierce lions and tigers, mahā musth-elephants, cheetahs, rhinoceroses, bears and other fearful-looking beasts.

8 Flesh-eaters many of them, but they sat near him with bowed heads, like disciples, and lovingly enquired about his health and welfare.

9 Well-being enquiries over, they left one by one, but there was this one creature, a village dog, who never left the mahā-muni.

10 He was a dedicatedly devoted *bhakta*. He was weakened and emaciated by fasting; and when he ate he chose roots and fruits and water. His mind was calm. He had an aura of goodness.

11 O mahā-minded Yudhiṣṭhira! He would sit at the feet of the ṛṣi as any human would, with deep and loving reverence.

12 It so happened one day a mahā-violent, flesh-eating cheetah, lusting for prey, came there, like cruel Kāla or Antāka-Yama,

13 Licking his lips, lashing his tail wildly, crazed with hunger, jaws agape. All he wanted was the dog for his meal.

14 O ruler of men! Lord of the world! Seeing the ruthless cheetah approach, the dog, fearing for his life, said to the muni:

15 "*Bhagavan*! Revered one! Cheetahs are enemies of dogs. This one wants to kill me, O mahā-muni. Favour me! Save me from this calamity!

16 O mahā-muscled one! Mahā-bāho! You can do anything – there is no doubt you can!" The glory-filled, inseeing muni intuited the cause of the dog's terror and said:

17 "My son, do not fear death from the cheetah. No fear at all. All that will happen is: look, you will lose your dog-form and become a cheetah!"

18 And instantly, the dog was changed into a golden cheetah. Striped glowing body, huge jaws, he fearlessly entered the forest.

19 When the cheetah saw an equally ferocious fellow-cheetah facing him, his own ferocity instantly left him.

20 Some time later, a fierce famished tiger, licking his jaws and thirsting for blood, confronted the cheetah.

21 Terrified by the awesome-looking, sharp-fanged tiger, the golden cheetah fled for his life back to the ṛṣi.

22 Such was the boundless supreme affection of the ṛṣi that he transformed the cheetah this time into a formidable enemy-repulsing tiger.

23 O lord of the world! How could a tiger kill one of his own species? In the meantime, the dog-turned-tiger, now a carnivorous beast,

24 Gave up his diet of roots and fruits. He now disliked all things vegetarian. Mahārāja, now, like a lord of animals, he fed on the flesh of other forest animals.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEEN

1 And so (continued Bhīṣma), the dog-turned-cheetah gorged himself on the flesh of forest beasts, and slept peacefully, near the muni's hut. One day, a cloud-huge musth-elephant came to that spot.

2 A mahā-beast, rutting juice streaming down its temples, auspicious lotus signs on its body, handsome-tusked, massive-eared, trumpeting like a booming cloud.

3 Seeing the musth-infuriated elephant lumbering towards him, the cheetah, terrified, ran for shelter to the ṛṣi.

4 The finest of ṛṣis transformed the cheetah into an elephant. The charging elephant saw one of his species, a cloud-huge beast, facing him, and paled with fear.

5 The lotus-marked elephant happily splashed about in the forest's lotus-filled lakes, and munched his fill in groves of *śallakī*-creepers.

6 Off and on he would return to the ṛṣi's hut. And so the time passed, night after night.

7 Till the day a tawny-maned lion turned up, a reddish-haired dweller in a mountain cave, a vicious lion who had singly despatched whole herds of elephants to the realm of Antaka-Yama.

8 Seeing that lion advancing towards him, the dog-turned-elephant fled in fear to the safety of the ṛṣi,

9 Who immediately transformed that Indra-among-elephants into a lion. And the stranger-lion, seeing one of his species, stopped, and stood there helpless.

10 In fact, he started trembling with fear himself. And the elephant-turned-lion passed his days happily in the āśrama in that mahā-forest.

11 The result was that the other animals, so scared were they of the lion, refused to be seen anywhere near the *tapovana* grove-of-tapasyā.

12 Then, as Kāla-yoga would have it, in course of time a massive, all-creature-killing carnivorous powerful beast, an instiller-of-multiple-fears,

13 An eight-legged monster called the *śarabha*, a scourge of that forest, lumbered to the muni's dwelling bent on killing the lion. The *śarabha*'s eyes were in the centre of his forehead.

14 Seeing the *śarabha* approaching, the terrified lion bounded to the ṛṣi, seeking his protection with his paws joined in respectful *añjali*.

15 So, foe-crushing Yudhiṣṭhira, the muni transformed the dog into a formidable *śarabha*. The wild *śarabha* was confronted by the muni-inade *śarabha*,

16 And the sight of the ferocious fellow-beast facing him sent him bounding back to the forest. The dog, changed by the muni into a *śarabha*,

17 Passed his days peacefully, living with the muni. The other animals of the forest, terrified by the *śarabha*,

18 Fearing for their lives, O rājā, kept a safe distance away from him. As for the *śarabha*, how he loved gobbling the flesh of his prey!

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19 He completely forgot he was a root-and-fruit vegetarian. One day, driven by an insatiable thirst for blood, that *śarabha*,

20 Who was born as a harmless dog, lusted for the muni's blood. The once-dog-now- *śarabha* thought : All he has to do is utter this potent word,

21 And I get changed into a *śarabha*, the terror of all the animals! There are many fear-ridden animals here, terrorised by elephants and others,

22 Many birds and beasts whose lives are safe because the muni protects them. Supposing he were to transform them all into *śarabhas* –

23 Why, he could make them stronger than any animal in the world! Why not, he has the power to turn every bird, any bird, into a veritable Garuḍa!

24 He is such a compassionate man – he gets so easily impressed – he'll gladly go and give super-strength to a creature he favours.

25 But before he can do that, why don't I finish him off? Sure as sure can be, with this twice-born muni out of the way, the forest is all mine.

26 With tapasyā-śakti and the inseeing eye of *jñāna*-knowledge,

27 The mahā-wise muni read the dog's mind and said: "From dog, a cheetah; from cheetah an elephant;

28 Lion from musth-elephant, from lion a fierce, powerful *śarabha* . . .

29 You are a low-born dog, but I felt sorry for you. But you, you wicked beast, you are now out to harm me who never wished you harm. Go back to your yoni! Become a dog again!"

30 Cursed by the ṛṣi, the stupid, wicked-ātmaned muni-hating *śarabha* was transformed back to his original dog-form.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEEN

1 Profound was the dog's grief (continued Bhīṣma) because of his re-transformation into his original form. Intoning "Huṁ!" the ṛṣi banished the guilty dog from his *tapovana.*

2 Therefore, a rājā should keep in mind the truthfulness, purity, sincerity, inborn nature, rectitude, śruti-knowledge, character, family background, self-control,

3 Compassion, strength, bravery, disposition, self-esteem and fortitude of those who work for him before giving them responsible posts.

4 No earth-lord should appoint a minister without testing him. No rājā will find happiness if he has lowborn retainers around him.

5 Even if rebuked by a rājā for no fault of his, a man from a respectable family will never think of harming his royal master, because the well-born always honour the well-born.

6 But a lowborn official, even in a coveted high post, attained through a gracious patron, can turn into an enemy if he is criticised.

7 Highborn, well-educated, wise, idealistic yet practical, *jñāna-vijñāna*-knower, percipient in the essence of the śāstras, forebearing, patriotic,

8 Grateful, strong, patient, self-controlled, sense-disciplined, not greedy, content with what he has, ready to help his master and his friends,

9 A minister aware of the importance of place and time, happy with the prosperity of others, mind concentrated on doing good,

10 Always prompt in fulfilling his responsibility, adept in peace and war matters, aware of the rājā's three-fold ideal of dharma-artha-kāma, loved by city-dwellers and villagers,

11 Expert in moats and army-formations, inspirer of the military, decipherer of body-language, knowledgeable in journeys and expeditions,

12 Expert elephant-trainer, free of *ahaṁkāra*-ego, self-confident, determined, self-controlled, strong, wishing always to do what is right,

13 Clean-minded, mixing with the clean-minded, friendly-faced, goodlooking, a leader who knows the art of administration, an enterprising all-rounder who has the finest guṇas,

14 Not rigid, and modest, affectionate, softspoken, a man of fortitude, brave, mahā-prosperous, who knows when to act and where to act –

15 This is a rājā's ideal minister, who must be learned in the śāstras, values the primacy of dharma, and seeks the welfare of the people.

16 A rājā who has such a minister will never find himself unrespected; and his kingdom will shine like the full moon.

17 Patient, tolerant, pure, correctly strict, appreciative of industriousness, open to ideas, learned in śruti, respectful to elders,

18 Intelligent, able to concentrate deeply, with the ability to make correct decisions, self-controlled, sweet-speaking, one who pardons lapses,

19 Who decides how to gift generously, and who to give to, pleasing to look at, saviour of the exploited, trustworthy, devoted to good rule,

20 Not thinking always of himself, aware of the interplay of life's opposites and contradictions, not arbitrary, not taking strong action until the actual commission of a crime, appreciative of servants,

21 Able to impress crowds, not rigid, always pleasant-looking, caring for his retainers, not given to wrath, mahā-minded,

22 Wielding the rod of punishment, never abandoning it, abiding by the rules of dharma, who makes spies his eyes, caring for his subjects, skilled in dharma and artha,

23 – Such is the rājā with a hundred good guṇas who is best for his subjects. O Indra-among-men! Warriors also should possess these qualities.

24 Seek out such men as friends and supporters of a rājā. Any rājā seeking prosperity and glory should never belittle such men.

25 These warriors must be indomitable in battle, grateful, learned in the śāstras of dharma, skilled in war-weapons, reinforced by detachments of foot-soldiers,

26 Fearless, trained to fight from elephant-backs, excellent chariot-heroes and archers. A king with their help can subjugate the whole world.

27 This earth belongs to the king who does not deceive relatives and retainers, and rules his kingdom with rectitude.

28 Long indeed will be the reign of the king who does not succumb to the weaknesses of laziness, excessive sleep, lust, and constant merry making.

29 Long indeed will be the reign of the king who is respectful to elders, is mahā-enterprising, protects the four castes, and abides by dharma.

30 Long indeed will be the reign of the king who walks the road of just administration, who encourages prosperity-creators, and keeps a watch on his enemies.

31 In the distant past, Manu explained the subtlety of human effort and fate. Let me give it to you now.

32 O enhancer of Kaurava glory! Bṛhaspati advised all Indra-like kings to struggle hard. Always keep in mind what is justice, what injustice.

33 The fruits of a kingdom belong to the king who wishes everyone's welfare, who is dedicated to progress, and has friends to support him.

34 O Bharata! A king who is able to attract competent men needs no more than a thousand brave horsemen to conquer this earth.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED NINETEEN

1 The lesson to learn (continued Bhīṣma) is that a lord of men will be able to enjoy the fruits of ruling a kingdom if he appoints responsible and accountable officers, who are not like the dog in the story.

2 The dog became obsessed with ideas above his station, and fell into disfavour. He became a victim of pride. A dog should be put in his place.

3 Appoint a person to a post that is consistent with his family background. It is risky to put a wrong man in a right job.

4 A rājā who appoints appropriate officers to appropriate positions enjoys fully the fruits that come from qualified workers.

5 A *śarabha* for the work of a *śarabha*, a lion for the work of a lion, a cheetah for the work of a cheetah, an elephant for the work of an elephant.

6 Each to his own karma – if you want to enjoy the fruits of such karma. To do otherwise is mismanagement.

7 Foolish is that lord of men who thinks he can make his subjects happy by appointing misfits in his administration.

8 If you are looking for excellently qualified workers, never employ the simple-minded, the lowborn, the unintelligent, the indisciplined and the mean-thinking.

9 Surround yourself with the honest, highborn, courageous, learned, unenvious, never-mean-thinking the clean-living and skilled.

10 A rājā should be served by men who are modest, quick to act, calm, astute, good naturally, and dedicated to their work.

11 Let the lion-like be with a lion. The point is: a less-than-a-lion who is with a lion will want the benefits that go with being a lion.

12 And how can a lion, surrounded by dogs, go about doing what a lion should do with so many canines dogging him?

13 O Indra-among-men! You can conquer the world if you have courageous multi-śruti-learned, and welborn followers to help you.

14 O finest of employers! It follows that earth-lords should not employ the unlearned, the unhonest, the unwise, and those who do not have mahā-wealth of their own.

15 And see that you look after them well – all who are dedicated to work for your welfare and prosperity, and are arrow-swift in their duties.

16 Rājās should guard well the royal treasury. The prosperity of a rājā is rooted in his treasury.

17 See that your storehouses are amply stocked with grain and corn. Put trustworthy men in charge. Increase productivity in agriculture unceasingly.

18 See that your retainers work assiduously, and train them in war-skills. See that they are skilled in equestrian matters.

19 O enhancer of Kaurava glory! Be considerate to your family members and friends, and promote the welfare of city-dwellers.

20 These are my views on how you should deal with your subjects. Keep the example of the dog in front of you. *Tāta*! Dear one! What else would you like to know?

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY

1 "O descendant of Bharata!" Yudhiṣṭhira said. "What learned people in the past said about Rāja-dharma – you have explained to me all the matters connected with the conduct of a rājā.

2 O bull-brave Bharata! You have gone into them in great detail. I would like you now to give me in brief the basic points."

3 The protection of all creatures (said Bhīṣma) is the primary duty of a Kṣatriya. Let me explain how this protection can be done.

4 Like a snake-eating peacock flaunting its colourful feathers, a dharma-knowing rājā has to display a multiplicity of forms:

5 Sharpness, deviousness, shelter-giver, truth-speaker, simplicity. These are some of the roles from whose vantage-points he can secure for himself safety and comfort.

6 The colour he assumes depends on the situation. A rājā can get the most complex problems simplified if he plays the right role.

7 Like the peacock, silent in autumn, the *śrīmān*-resplendent ruler who knows well the śāstras always keeps his plans secret.

8 In times of calamity, such as the bursting of a dam, he is the sentry at the gate; he keeps watch and organises help. Like men depending on lakes formed by rivers flowing down majestic hills, the rājā depends on the twice-born, in his role as suppliant. To achieve his end by any means, he flies the flag of dharma like a tuft-knot on his head.

9 He wields the rod of punishment, but prudently, when collecting taxes, going from one prosperous tree to another, like a gatherer of rare sap.

10 With his own people, he is fair and just. He exposes his enemies, and destroys their fields, but only when his wings have grown strong.

11 He takes advantage of his enemy's weaknesses, and gathers to himself his allies. Like a person collecting flowers from a forest, he accumulates wealth from outside his kingdom.

12 He humbles the pride of hill-high monarchs who oppose him, and secretly moves in their shadow, undermining them with ambushes and surprise attacks.

13 Like the peacock in the monsoon, he lies low in his palace at night, dallying unobserved with his wives.

14 He should never be without his armour, defenceless. He is his own lord. He should be wary of the snares laid for him by his enemies.

15 He should not shirk risking his life – let him go to a dense forest and unearth the snares. Having done so, he should extirpate his snake-like venomous foes.

16 Let him slice the wings of his foe, debilitate and crush him. Like the peacock, let him spread his own wings far and wide. Deciding independently, he should seek the help even of minor allies – a horde of petty insects can ravage a dense forest.

17 A rājā should protect his kingdom like a peacock guarding its territory. His policy must always be guided by the desire to consolidate and enhance the welfare of the land.

18 The teaching of the śāstras is clear – only your own *buddhi*-discrimination can control the ātman in yourself. The *buddhi*-advice of others can be some help. Your *buddhi* alone can give you an insight into the guṇa-nature of your ātman.

19 Let him encourage trust by conciliation, but never by surrending his śakti. Let him use his *buddhi* to discover and display the power of his ātman.

20 Let him adopt the means of reasoned persuasion about what should be done and what should not be done. How will it help to try to convince a wise person who already knows what needs to be done?

21 He may be as brilliant as Bṛhaspati, but if he becomes over-authoritarian he should calm down, like a heated black iron rod placed in water.

22 It is essential that an earth-lord assign duties that are appropriate not just to others but also to himself.

23 It goes without saying saying that he should gather round him men who are gentle, wise and brave if he desires glory for himself and his kingdom.

24 With each worker performing his assigned duty, the result will be a united success, like the different strings of a vīṇā producing one *svara*-melody.

25 A rājā should try to please all, but never at the expense of dharma. Firm as a hill is the fame of a king whose subjects proclaim, "He is our rājā!"

26 Those who know what family, human nature, patriotism and dharma mean, who are soft-spoken, free from blame till middle age, ready to promote the general good, anxiety-free,

27 Not greedy, well educated, self-controlled, firm in dharma, and dedicated to protect dharma and artha–they should be given responsibility by a rājā.

28 In this way should a king supervise the start and completion of projects. With spies reporting to him regularly, his mind will be at peace.

29 This earth lavishes wealth on the king who uses anger and joy well, supervises work regularly, and knows that the ātman is the only true royal treasury.

30 Only that rājā can be said to know Rāja-dharma who rewards and punishes justly, who protects himself as well as his kingdom.

31 He is like the all-seeing sun that rises early with cows going out to graze, and his spies are everywhere, following his intelligent orders.

32 Like a practical man who milks cows only after caring for them well, an intelligent rājā collects wealth from his people only after giving them every possible protection and facility.

33 Like a bee storing honey from the pollen of many flowers, a rājā collects vast wealth, little by little, from many subjects.

34 Only the wealth left over from the care of his kingdom should be spent on dharma and kāma-pleasures. A śāstra-learned rājā never wastes wealth.

35 Let him not spurn wealth, no matter how little. Let him not ignore enemies, no matter how small. Let him examine himself with his *buddhi*-intelligence and never trust those who have no *buddhi*-intelligence.

36 The fuel for feeding the fire of wealth consists of perseverance, skill, discipline, fortitude, self-knowledge, enterprise, right action at the right time, and vigilance. These eight relate to all wealth, small or large.

37 Sprinkled with ghee, the littlest fire becomes a fiery blaze. A single seed proliferates into a thousand seeds. Many will be the ups and downs, but that should not make a person belittle small amounts of wealth.

38 Child, adult, or elderly, an enemy can be in course of time a fatal threat to one's very roots. Blessed is the king who is always conscious of Kāla.

39 A clear-minded king must always beware of the danger of having an enemy, weak or strong. A bitter enemy can harm one's fame, one's dharma, and over a period of time, sap one's energy.

40 It is a difficult balancing art – suppressing enemies and enhancing one's prosperity. It calls for knowledge of loss and gain, and security and wealth-accumulation. A rājā is advised to take the help of a *buddhi*-gifted man in this matter.

41 Radiant intelligence routs physical strength. Physical strength flourishes with intelligent guidance. Intelligence demolishes a flourishing foe. Let us all praise intelligent deeds.

42 A patient, fault-free king can achieve all he desires with minimal effort. But the king who surrounds himself with self-seeking solicitors for favours fails to find even the least fulfilment.

43 Which is why a rājā should always exact tribute from his subjects in the gentlest way. Let him not oppress them, by descending on them like a flash of lightning.

44 The bases of success on a large scale are learning, tapasyā, and vast wealth. These three demand deep dedication. Dedication energises the body. There is nothing higher than deep dedication.

45 The human body is the dwelling-place of celestial personality such as Śakra-Indra's, Visnru's and Sarasvati's. Learned men gifted with percipience, for this reason, should never think poorly of the body.

46 Destroy the greedy man with large gifts. A greedy man's greed is never satiated. Everyone seeks to enjoy the reards the past karma. Without wealth, however, dharma and kāma are forgotten.

47 A greedy man lusts for the wealth, luxuries, wife and sons, and assets of others. Every possible vice attaches to the greedy man, which is why a rājā should never employ a greedy man.

48 Even a despicable person can be cleverly employed and so manipulated as to sabotage the plans and prosperity of one's enemies.

49 O Pāṇḍava Yudhiṣṭhira! Only a person who excels in knowledge of dharma, who can keep a secret, who is highborn and trustworthy, should be a rājā's minister, and none else.

50 I have given you, briefly, the tenets of what is known as nara-deva-dharma, the dharma meant for the god-among-men, the king. This is the great tradition. Only that rājā who fathoms its meaning and puts it in practice will succeed in properly protecting this earth.

51 What good is royal happiness that is a product of accident or chance, not royal effort or fate-deserved? That earth-lord knows nothing of what is supremely precious, he knows nothing of the happiness that ruling a kingdom can bring.

52 It is the materially prosperous ruler, who has character and is pūjā-respected by his subjects, a brave king with superlative guṇa-qualities who ultimately succeeds in routing his foes.

53 A king must always have a plan of action. Without any positive plan, he will achieve nothing. If all he sees is faults, neither Śri-splendour, nor fame, nor wealth will be his.

54 When two friends, happy together, for whatever reason fall out, a wise man who knows both will always speak pleasingly about the friend whose burden is heavier because he takes the blame.

55 O king! Practise well this Rāja-dharma that I have clarified to you. Devote yourself to the service and protection of your subjects. Fruitful will be your *puṇya-phala* rewards, happy your life, because this world, and everything in it, is rooted in dharma.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-ONE

1 "Pitāmaha," said Yudhiṣṭhira, "you have clarified to me Sanātana Rāja-dharma, the eternal dharma of rājās, the īśvara lord of all, the mahā-rod of punishment. All depends on punishment.

2 Gods, ṛṣis, *pitṛs*, mahātmās, yakṣas, rākṣasas, *piśācas*, Sādhyas – all the remarkable and striking variety

3 Of living creatures, all the birds and beasts of this world are ruled ideally by punishment, which, O lord, is a mahā-energetic, ubiquitous force.

4 According to you, everything moving or unmoving, whatever we see, gods, antigods and humans, falls, within the purview of punishment. I would like to know more about this, O bull-brave Bharata.

5 What is this rod of punishment? Exactly what? What is its form? What does it consist of? What is its origin, O lord? Its *mūrti*-features?

6 How does it stay awake and keep watch on the multiplicity of life? Who and what is it that is so protective of creatures?

7 How was it known in earlier times? Who is this person called 'The Punishing Rod'? What are his principles, his procedure?"

8 Bhīṣma replied: Listen to me, Kaurava descendant, I will tell you what punishment is, and how it operates. Everything depends on punishment alone.

9 Mahārāja! The other name of Dharma is, simply, Vyavahāra or the System of Justice. That which promotes human welfare, instead of diminishing it,

10 Is Vyavahāra, or justice that is based on dharma. In the distant past, O rājā, it was Manu who declared:

11 "He who protects his subjects,
those dear to him, and those not dear,
wielding impartially the rod of punishment –
he by himself is Dharma."

12 O Indra-among-men! That was Manu's ancient statement. What I have said, is the mahā-statement of Brahmā.

13 Because Manu said this long ago, it is called the *prāg-vacana* or "the early statement". It is called *vyavahāra* because it deals with the system of justice.

14 The benefits of *tri-varga* dharma-artha-kāma come from the rod of punishment. Supreme punishment is god-like: it blazes with the effulgence of fire.

15 It has a blue lotus complexion, richly dark; four teeth and four arms; eight legs and many eyes, sharp-pointed ears, and bristling upright hair.

16 It is matted-haired, and two-tongued, it has copper-red mouth, and skin like that of the rājā of beasts. Its physique always radiates fierce force.

17 Sword, bow, mace, śakti-spear, trident, mudgara-mallet, arrow, *musala*-club, *paraśu*-axe, *cakra*, noose, *daṇḍa*-bludgeon, lance, short spear –

18 Punishment assumes all these shapes, becoming as it were the ātman of each, and roams all over the world asserting its power.

19 Punishment straddles the world, shattering, cutting, crushing, slicing, battering, killing, and assaulting.

20 Sword, Sabre, Dharma, Knife-Edged, Irresistible, Śrī-garbha Womb-of-Prosperity, Victory, Ruler, Vyavahāra-Judge, Sanātana the Everlasting,

21 Śāstra-Scriptures, Brāhmaṇa, Mantra, Śāstra-Administrator, the Earliest Word-Proclaimer and the Best, Dharma-pāla Judge Law-Protector, Indestructible, Divinity, Truthful, Eternal, Snatcher,

22 Asaṁga-Impartial, Rudra-Śiva's son, Manu, the Eldest of all, the Beneficent Śivaṁkara–these are some of the illustrious names of Punishment, O Yudhiṣṭhira.

23 Daṇḍa-Punishment is Bhagavan Viṣṇu, Daṇḍa-Punishment is Prabhu Nārāyaṇa. Because he has an everlasting mahā-form, he is known as the Mahā-Puruṣa.

24 Brahmā's daughter is Daṇḍa-nīti, the Rules of Punishment. Lakṣmī, Vṛtti-Character, Sarasvatī and Jagad-dhātrī are her other names. Many are the forms and shapes of Punishment.

25 Artha and lack-of-artha, joy and sorrow, dharma and adharma, strength and weakness, good fortune and ill fortune, merit and demerit, guṇa and non-guṇa;

26 Kāma-akāma, seasons and months, night-day-instant, careful-careless, delight and anger, serenity, self-control;

27 Fate and human effort, mokṣa and non-mokṣa, fear and fearlessness, harming others and ahiṁsa, tapasyā and yajña and discipline, poison and antidote;

28 Beginning-middle-and-end, practice of sorcery, intoxication, negligence, pride, hyprocrisy, patience, good policy and bad policy;

29 Śakti and non-śakti, respect and disrespect, decay and non-decay, humility and rigidity, right time for action and wrong time for action, O Bharata;

30 Knowledge of truth and untruth, śraddhā-faith and lack of śraddhā, cowardice and courage, gain and loss, victory and failure;

31 Bitterness and mildness, death, coming and going, bondage and freedom, to-be-done and not-to-be-done, power and debility;

32 Envy and lack of envy, dharma and adharma, turning away one's face bashfully and not turning away one's face bashfully, modesty, prosperity and adversity;

33 *Tejas*-energy, karma, paṇḍit-learning, the śakti of *vāk*-eloquence, analytical insight – these, O Kaurava, are the myriad faces of the Rod of Punishment in this world.

34 Had Punishment disappeared from this world, O Yudhiṣṭhira, human beings would have destroyed each other. Fear of punishment prevents mutual slaughter.

35 O rājā! Protected every day by the Rod of Punishment, the subjects of a rājā enhance his glory, because Punishment is the preserver of all.

36 O lord of men! It is Punishment that establishes the supremacy of truth. Truth is the essence of dharma, and dharma is found in dharma-knowing Brahmins.

37 The finest of the twice-born are those dedicated to dharma and the wisdom of the Vedas. Yajñas proceed from the Vedas, and yajñas are pleasing to the gods.

38 Gratified, the gods pass their pleasure on to Indra, and Śakra-Indra is pleased to grant food to the creatures of this world.

39 Food is the basis of the *prāṇa*-life-breath of all creatures. All life depends on food. Punishment keeps a vigilant watch on all life.

40 That is why Punishment appears in this world as a Kṣatriya – an ever-watchful Kṣatriya, always carefully protecting, never deteriorating.

41 Īśvara-lord, Puruṣa Supreme Person, Prāṇa-Life-Breath, Sattva-Essence, Citta-Consciousness, Prajāpati Lord-of-life, Bhūtātmā Ātman-of-creatures, Jīva Individual Self – are the eight names of Punishment.

42 The Rod of Punishment is the basis of real power. Its power is connected with the five following elements:

43 Family, vast wealth, ministers, wisdom, and physical force. Another kind of power comes, Yudhiṣṭhira, from the following eight things:

44 Elephants, horses, chariots, foot-soldiers, ships, labourers, the population of the kingdom, and cattle – these eight constitute power also.

45 The different limbs – chariots, horse-riders, elephant-warriors, foot-soldiers, ministers and advisors, physicians,

46 Beggars, lawyers, astrologers, diviners, treasury, allies, food supplies, miscellaneous equipment –

47 These seven (lord, minister, ally, treasury, territory, forts, army), and the eight-fold army – know these to be the body of the kingdom. The most potent limb of this body is Daṇḍa the Rod of Punishment.

48 The Lord Īśvara placed this rod of equal justice for all in the hands of Kṣatriyas for the everlasting protection of all people.

49 Nothing is more pūjā-worthy for rājās than Daṇḍa, because Daṇḍa is Dharma itself. Brahmā gave it for the protection of the world, and for the practice of sva-dharma.

50 Another form of punishment, Bhartṛpratyayalakṣaṇa, proceeds from a master's authority to arbitrate in disputes for the litigants' mutual benefit.

51 O tiger-among-men! Another, the Veda-pratyaya, has its ātman-source in the Vedas-Still another, very ancient, is the Śāstrokta, the śāstra-ordained.

52 The Bhartṛ-pratyaya-lakṣaṇa, mentioned earlier, is the sole prerogative of all-powerful Indra-like rājās, since it exercises absolute arbitrary authority.

53 Though absolute, that punishment must also be considered legitimate. It is Veda-ātmaned also, and part of the legal tradition of vyavahāra.

54 Whatever has its ātman-source in the Vedas has the guṇa-qualites of dharma. Only ātman-integrated people establish the dharma of punishment.

55 It is for the protection of people, Yudhiṣṭhira, that Brahmā established the vyavahāra-tradition of justice. Its ātman is satya-truth itself, it enhances glory, it supports the three worlds.

56 Punishment must be seen as the basis of the everlasting tradition of justice. Without any doubt, the tradition of justice can be said to be the Vedas.

57 The Vedas are Dharma, and Dharma is the path of good people. Good people are Brahmā Pitāmaha, Lord-of-creatures-Prajāpati, the first of all life,

58 The Creator of all the worlds, of gods, antigods, rākṣasas, humans and *uraga*-serpents, the Maker of the multitudinosity of life.

59 He is the creator of the tradition of justice known as the Bhartṛ-pratyaya-lakṣaṇa, and it is he who gave this darshan-insight into the signifiance of vyavahāra:

60 "Mother, father, brother, wife, purohita – none is exempt from a rājā's punishment, if he or she fails to follow sva-dharma."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-TWO

1 To illustrate the origin of punishment (continued Bhīṣma) is an ancient *itihāsa*-story. Listen to this story. There was once a radiant rājā of Aṅga named Vasuhoma.

2 A rājā of mahā-tapasyā, always devoted to dharma. Accompanied by his wife, he once went to Muñjapṛṣṭha, a place where *pitṛs*, gods, and ṛṣis offered pujā.

3 Muñjāvaṭa is near a Himalayan peak, next to the golden mountain Meru, and it was here that Paraśurāma ordered the braiding of his matted hair.

4 From then on, O Indra-among-rājās, strict-vowed ṛṣis dedicated to the service of Rudra-Śiva designated that spot as Muñjapṛṣṭha.

5 Replete with guṇas of śruti-learning, respected by Brahmins, the king stayed there, as glorious as a deva-ṛṣi.

6 One day, Śakra-Indra's loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend, foe-crushing earth-ruler Māndhātā visited him.

7 Approaching him, Māndhātā stood humbly before lord-of-men Vasuhoma, awed by the intensity of his tapasyā.

8 Vasuhoma offered rājā Māndhāta *arghya*-welcome with water to wash his feet, and asked if all was well in his seven-limbed kingdom.

9 Then Vasuhoma respectfully said to Māndhāta, who always walked the path of noble traditional values, "O rājā, what can I do for you?"

10 O delight of the Kauravas! Extremely gratified, Māndhātā said to the mahā-wise finest-of-rājās Vasuhoma, who had sat down:

11 "O rājā! O most excellent of men! You have studied carefully all the teachings of Bṛhaspati. You are also proficient in the śāstra-learning of Uśanas-Śukra.

12 What I would like to know from you is the origin of punishment. What was awake and vigilant before it originated? Why is it supreme?

13 How did the Rod of Punishment come to be in the hands of Kṣatriyas? O mahā-wise one, tell me this – and accept an ācārya's fee."

14 Vasuhoma replied, "Punishment is what provides protection and stability. Everlasting is the ātman of Punishment, the guardian of all people, for it is Dharma itself.

15 We have heard that Brahmā, the Pitāmaha of all the worlds, wanted to perform a yajña, but Bhagavān Brahmā could not find a *ṛtvik* his equal.

16 So Brahmā-deva created a womb in his head. A thousand years passed; then Brahmā sneezed and the foetus in the womb slipped out and fell.

17 O foe-chastiser! That baby was named Kṣupa, the sneezed-out one. Mahārāja, that brilliant boy, a Prajāpati, became mahātmā Brahma's *ṛtvik*.

18 O bull-brave earth-lord! As soon as the *sattra*-sacrifice of Brahmā commenced, punishment vanished because Brahmā was present there pleased and happy with the proceedings.

19 With punishment absent, confusion gripped the people. No one seemed to know what should be done, and what should not be done;

20 What eaten, what not eaten; what drunk, what not drunk; with whom to go, with whom not; what belonged to oneself, what to another.

21 They snapped at each other, like dogs squabbling over a chunk of meat. The strong ruthlessly slaughtered the weak.

22 So Pitāmaha Brahmā went to Sanātana Bhagavān Viṣṇu, offered his pujā-respect to that boon-granting Divinity Mahādeva, and said:

23 'Śaṅkara! Show your compassion. Find a way to end this utter chaos.'

24 The *śūla*-weapon-wielding Bhagavān, the finest of the gods, thought deeply for a while, and then personified himself as Daṇḍa, the Rod of Punishment.

25 From that Rod materialised Devī Sarasvatī, the goddess of dharma-based justice, celebrated in the three worlds.

26 *Śūla*-weapon-wielding Viṣṇu meditated for a long period of time, and decided to appoint one – and only one – *īśvara*-lord for each of many different groups.

27 He made the thousand-eyed divinity, Daśaśatekṣaṇa Indra the sole lord of the gods, and Vaivasvata Yama the lord of the *pitṛs*.

28 Kubera became the lord of wealth and rākṣasas, Meru of mountains, and the mahā-ocean of rivers.

29 Prabhu-lord Varuṇa was given dominion over the waters and antigods, Death over *prāṇa*-life-breaths, and Hutāśana-Agni the carrier of oblations over *tejasa*-radiances.

30 Large-eyed, eternal, mahātmā Mahadeva became the lord and protector of all the Rudras.

31 Vāsiṣṭha became the lord of Brahmins, Jātaveda-Agni of Vasus, Bhāskara the sun of dazzling energies, the Moon of *nakṣatra*-planets.

32 Aṁśumān became the lord of herbs, and twelve-armed Kumāra-Skanda became the rājā-lord of *bhūta*-spirits.

33 Cosmic Time Kāla, the all-humbler and all-destroyer, became lord of the four-fold death–weapons, diseases, Yama, and activity – and also of sorrow and happiness.

34 According to śruti, the *iśvara*-lord, the god of all, the rājā-of-rājās, the ruler of mortals, the chief of the Rudras is *śūla*-wielding Śiva.

35 Brahmā's son Kṣupa, who was born later, was appointed the overlord of creatures, of all who believe in the supremacy of dharma.

36 After the completion of Brahmā's yajña in the prescribed manner, Mahādeva handed the Rod of Punishment, the guardian of Dharma, respectfully to Viṣṇu.

37 Viṣṇu passed it on to Aṅgiras, finest of munis; Aṅgiras passed it on to Indra and Marīci; and Marici passed it on to Bhṛgu.

38 Bhṛgu passed the Rod of Punishment, combined with Dharma, to the ṛṣis; from the ṛṣis it went to the Lokapālas; and the Lokapāla World-Guardians gave it to Kṣupa.

39 Kṣupa gave it to the Manu Śrāddha, the son of Āditya the sun; and Śrāddha-deva, to preserve subtle dharma and artha, gave it to his sons.

40 It is essential that Punishment should follow dharma and be impartial. Its aim is to punish the criminal, not collect gold for the treasury.

41 It must not decree physical torture or the death sentence for trivial offences, nor dismemberment nor banishment for petty crimes.

42 Sūrya's son Manu passed the Rod to his son for the protection of people. Punishment is successively passed on; it is the ever-vigilant protector of civilisation.

43 Bhagavān Indra is ever-watchful. From Indra to dazzling Vibhāvasu-Agni, from Agni to Varuṇa, from Varuṇa to Prajāpati, all vigilant.

44 From Prajāpati to Dharma whose essence is restraint and self-discipline; from Dharma to Brahmā's son, Sanātana Vyavāsaya which is Eternal Mission.

45 Eternal Mission gives the energy to protect. From Tejas-Energy to herbs, from herbs to mountains;

46 From mountains to rasa-water, from rasa to the guṇas of rasa; then to Nirṛti-devī the goddess of ruin, from Nirṛti the *jyotiṣa*-radiances.

47 From the stellar radiances to the Vedas, from the Vedas to Prabhu-lord Hayśira-Hayagrīva, from him to the eternally vigilant undecaying Pitāmaha Brahmā.

48 From Pitāmaha Brahmā to the ever-watchful divinity Bhagavān Śiva, from Śiva to the Viśva-deva world deities, from the Visvadevas to the ṛṣis;

49 From the ṛṣis to Bhagavān Soma, from Soma to the eternal gods, and from the eternal gods to the vigilant Brahmins of the world.

50 From the Brahmins to the rājās who protect the world with dharma. From Kṣatriyas comes the everlasting *sanātana*-power that protects the moving and unmoving life of the world.

51 People are vigilant, and Punishment is vigilant. Punishment is the equal of all-protecting Brahmā.

52 O Bharata! Punishment is Cosmic Time Kāla, ever-watchful at start, middle, and end. It is the *īśvara*-lord of the worlds, it is Mahādeva, it is Prajāpati,

53 It is Deva-deva the God-of-gods, Lord of all, always awake, it is Kapardin, Śaṅkara, Rudra, Śiva-Sthāṇu, Umā-pati.

54 This Punishment is awake at start, middle and end. Dharma-dedicated rulers of the earth should abide by its principles."

55 Whoever listens to this teaching of Vasuhoma (said Bhīṣma), and abides by it, will find his desires fulfilled.

56 O bull-brave mortal! O Bhārata! I have explained everything. Punishment is what restrains all who violate dharma.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-THREE

1 "*Tāta*! Revered and loved one!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "I would like to hear from you about Dharma, Artha and Kāma. On which of these does the world revolve?

2 What are the roots of Dharma, Artha and Kāma? How did they come into being? How are they interconnected, and how are they different?"

3 When people happily (replied Bhīṣma) pursue Artha with the help of Dharma, then the three are interconnected; then the time is right, the cause is right, and the karma is right.

4 The root of Artha is always Dharma, and Kāma is the fruit of Artha. Wishing is the root of all three, and wishing is for things and objects.

5 It's the senses that wish for things, and things exist to feed the senses. Since wishing is the root of Dharma, Artha, Kama, not-wishing is Mokṣa.

6 Dharma is what protects the body, and Artha is needed to cultivate Dharma. Pleasure is the fruit of Kāma. *Rajas*-guṇa-energy suffuses all three.

7 If the mind hankers for these three, how can it ever transcend physical things? Only tapasyā and not-wishing make Dharma and Kāma meaningful.

8 Success in matters concerning Dharma, Artha and Kāma lies in intelligent discrimination. Even then, success in Artha is chancy – it comes and goes.

9 The point is: factors other than Dharma can lead to success in Artha. Artha can create serious problems. Pathetic is the ignorant person who cannot see that Dharma promotes Artha, and Artha promotes Dharma.

10 Dharma's flaw is jealousy, Artha's flaw is secrecy, Kāma's flaw is lust, each sva-guṇa carried to excess.

11 There is an ancient *itihāsa*-story about this, involving a conversation that took place between Kāmandaka and Āṅgariṣṭha.

12 It so happened once that the ṛṣi Kāmandaka was sitting at ease when lord-of-men Āṅgariṣṭha arrived, honoured him, and asked:

13 "O ṛṣi! Say a rājā, deluded by kāma, has committed a grave crime, and is stricken with remorse. What can he do to expiate his crime?

14 How often in this world do people think adharma is dharma! What can a rājā do to set things right?"

15 Kāmandaka replied: "If a man relentlessly chases Kāma at the expense of Dharma and Artha, he is destroying his moral intelligence.

16 When moral intelligence is destroyed, confusion takes over, and Dharma and Artha are destroyed next. Then comes *nāstika* negative thinking, followed by wicked misbehaviour.

17 If a rājā fails to punish the guilty, his subjects will look upon him as they would on a fierce snake in their homes.

18 His subjects, including Brahmins and sādhus, will refuse to support him. They will see him as useless, and he might even get assassinated.

19 Criticised and despised, what a shameful life will be his! An existence of such misery – what is it but a living death?

20 According to *ācāryas*, he can expiate by, first, acknowledging his fault; then, studying the three Vedas; and, finally, revering Brahman-knowers.

21 Also, he should practise mahā-respect for dharma; he should marry a girl from a mahā-respectable family; and he should serve diligently Brahmins who are patient and forgiving.

22 He should intone *japa*-meditation, he should cultivate a cheerful disposition, banish criminals, and seek the company of all who are devoted to dharma.

23 He should please people with sweet speech and good deeds. He should praise the virtues of others, saying, 'What you say is right.'

24 If he dissociates himself from evil ways, he will soon earn popular approval. You can be sure that even the worst ill-deeds can be thus expiated.

25 Follow what your gurus and elders say is the ideal dharma. You will be blessed by the grace of your gurus and elders."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FOUR

1 "O finest of men!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "What worries me greatly is the excessive praise of dharma by people.

2 O finest of followers of dharma! If you think it possible for me to understand this, I would like to know about it in detail.

3 How does one go about acquiring moral behaviour known as *śīla*? O finest of eloquent speakers, explain to me its signs. I am eager to learn."

4 Bhīṣma replied: O bestower of respect! When Duryodhana smarted seeing your great prosperity not so long ago –

5 Your prosperity and your brothers' prosperity in Indraprastha, O mahārāja – and because he felt humiliated in the sabhā – listen to the whole story of what he said, O Bharata,

6 To his father Dhṛtarāṣṭra in the luxurious sabhā of the Kauravas, because what he said is very similar to what you have asked.

7 Dhṛtarāṣṭra heard what his son had to say, and then, in the presence of Karṇa, he said to Duryodhana:

8 "Tell me, my son, why are you so upset? Give me the whole truth. If I am satisfied with your story, I will try to help you.

9 O destroyer of hostile cities! Mahā-glory is yours also – your brothers, your friends, your other relatives are always ready to serve you.

10 You wear the richest robes, you eat the tastiest meats, the finest *ājāneya* horses are yours to ride – why then are you so pale and weak?"

11 Duryodhana replied: "Ten thousand mahātmā *snātaka* Brahmin novitiates feast daily in Yudhiṣṭhira's palace on golden plates.

12 I see in that sabhā celestial flowers and fruits, excellent-pedigreed *tittira* and *kalmāśa* horses, dappled horses, and such a diversity of dresses –

13 O Bharata, I see the Pāṇḍavas – my enemies – basking in opulence that rivals the prosperity of the god of wealth Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera – and this is the cause of my mahā-grief."

14 "*Tāta*, dear son," said Dhṛtarāṣṭra. "My dear son! O lion-among-men! To be prosperous like Yudhiṣṭhira, cultivate character, cultivate *śīla*.

15 There is no doubt that qualities of character can conquer the three worlds. Nothing is impossible for a person who has character.

16 It took Māndhātā exactly one day, Janamejaya three days, and Nābhāga seven days to conquer the earth.

17 All these earth-lords were men of character, who felt for others. They did not have to subdue the earth; the earth surrendered to them."

18 "What is this thing character, which is known as *śīla*," asked Duryodhana, "with which the kings so easily acquired the earth? Tell me, O Bharata."

19 Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied: There is in this connection, O Bharata descendant, an ancient historical story narrated by Nāmada concerning character.

20 With the help of character, the Daitya antigod Prahlāda took possession of mahātmā Mahendra-Indra's kingdom and the three worlds as well.

21 So Śakra-Indra, in his mahā-wisdom, with palms joined in *añjali*, approached Bṛhaspati and said, "What is best for me now?"

22 O enhancer and perpetuator of the glory of the Kauravas! Bṛhaspati informed him that the supreme prosperity was knowledge. So Bhagavan Bṛhaspati enlightened Devendra-Indra.

23 But Indra was not satisfied with what was said by Bṛhaspati. So he asked again, "Is there anything higher than that?"

24 Bṛhaspati replied: "*Tāta*! Dear one! O bull-brave deity! The mahātmā Bhārgava Śukra knows an even greater mahā-truth. Go to him. *Bhadraṁte*: May all go well with you."

25 Supremely radiant Indra of supreme mahā-tapasyā learnt from the Bhārgava Śukra the truth even greater.

26 After the Bhārgava mahātmā had given him the truth even greater, Śatakratu-Indra asked Śukra, "Is there any truth even greater?"

27 The all-wise Bhārgava said: "Mahātmā Prahlāda knows a truth even greater." This delighted Indra.

28 Chastiser-of-Pāka Pākaśāsana-Indra disguised himself as a Brahmin. Wise Indra said to Prahlāda, "I want to know the highest good."

29 Prahlāda said to the Brahmin: "O bull-brave twice-born! I have no time, I am so busy ruling the three worlds. I cannot enlighten you."

30 The Brahmin replied: "O rājā, I will come to you whenever you find some time for me, and learn from you the supreme truth."

32 As appropriate and approved, the Brahmin served his guru with complete dedication, fulfilling his least wish even before he expressed it in words.

[XII:124:33-43]

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33 The Brahmin repeatedly asked Prahlāda: "You who are wise in dharma, tell me: how did you gain lordship of the three worlds?" Mahārāja, Prahlāda replied to the Brahmin:

34 "O Brahmin! Finest of the twice-born! I never say arrogantly, 'I am a rājā.' I listen to what others say, and try to abide by their advice.

35 People feel no restraint in advising me, and I abide by the principles of Kāvya-Śukra, and I serve all who are enlightened.

36 I follow dharma, conquer my anger, and control my senses. Like bees supplying *kṣandra*-honey in a hive, my advisers pour counsel in my ears.

37 I relish the rasa that rolls off their eloquent tongues, and I feel I am like the moon surrounded by so many *nakṣatra*-stars.

38 The wisdom of Śukra that comes from the lips of Brahmins is pure *amṛta*-nectar; it is the inseeing eye. It inspires, nourishes, fulfils."

39 This is what Prahlāda said to the Brahma-knower, who wanted to know what was best. Indra-among-Daityas Prahlāda added:

40 "O finest of the twice-born! I am pleased with your guru-devotion. May you prosper! Ask any boon, and I will give it to you."

41 The Brahmin said to the Indra-among-Daityas: "I am fully fulfilled." This delighted Prahlāda and he said, "You must ask for a boon."

42 The Brahmin said, "If you are happy, O rājā, and pleased with me, the boon I want is this: I want your character."

43 The Indra-among-Daityas was pleased, of course, and at the same time filled with fear. He thought: This Brahmin has more than ordinary radiance.

44 But he said, "So be it," and granted the boon. He was deeply disturbed, however, by what had happened. Depression overpowered him.

45 The Brahmin left with the boon, and Prahlāda was plunged in anxiety. He wondered, mahārāja, what he should now do, and no solution came to console him.

46 *Tāta*! Dear one! As he brooded, a mahā-radiant form issued out of his body, a shadowy being, an apparition.

47 Prahlāda asked that mahā-being, "Sir, who are you?" The answer came: "I am Character. You gave me away, so I am leaving you.

48 I will go now and live with that blameless pupil of yours, O rājā, that excellent twice-born young man who served you so devotedly."

49 *Prabhu*! Lord! Saying this, the being vanished, and entered the body of Śakra-Indra. A second, equally radiant being

50 Issued from the body of Prahlāda, who asked: "Who are you?" "Prahlāda, know me to be Dharma," came the reply. "Where the excellent Brahmin is,

51 There will I go. O Indra-among-Daityas, where character is, there I am." Mahārāja! Still another marvellously radiant being

52 Issued out of the body of mahātmā Prahlāda. On being questioned "Sir, who are you?", the effulgent apparition replied:

53 "O Indra-of-the-anti gods! Know me to be Truth. Where Dharma goes, I follow." With the departure of Truth, another mahā-presence

54 Materialised, and on being questioned, the mahā-powerful being said, "Prahlāda, I am Integrity. Where Truth is, there I am."

55 Integrity left, and a mahā-noise issued from Prahlāda's body. Questioned, it replied: "I am Power. Where Integrity is, there I am."

56 Saying this, O ruler of men, Power followed Integrity. Then a *prabhāmayi* Refulgent Goddess appeared from the body of Prahlāda.

57 On being questioned by the Indra-among-Daityas Prahlā da, the radiant devī replied: "I am Śrī, goddess of prosperity. O truly valiant hero, I came by myself, without your asking, to you,

58 But since you have rejected me, I will leave you, and go where Power has gone." Fear now possessed mahātmā Prahlāda.

59 He asked: "O lotus-lovely lotus-dwelling goddess! Kamalāye! Where are you going? You are Satyavratā devī, the truth-dedicated goddess of the world, you are Parameśvarī, the Supreme Goddess. Who is this excellent Brahmin?"

60 The goddess Śrī replied: "*Prabhu*! Lord! The brahmacārī student who came to you was none other than Śakra-Indra himself. He has taken away your glorious lordship of the threee worlds.

61 O dharma-wise one! It was your character that made you lord of the three worlds. *Prabhu*! Lord! Surendra-Indra knew this, so he planned to take away your character.

62 O mahā-wise one! Dharma, Truth, Integrity, Power, and I, Śrī-Prosperity, are rooted in Character. This is always the way it is. There can be no doubt about this."

63 And so, Yudhiṣṭhira (said Bhīṣma), saying this, Śrī went away, and all the others went away. Listening to this, Duryodhana asked his father:

64 “O enhancer of Kaurava glory! I want to know the essence of character. I want to know how one can acquire character.”

65 “Lord of men,” Dhṛtarāṣṭra replied, “Prahlāda has already explained this. But let me in brief clarify what that mahātmā said.

66 The character that all praise consists of this: Absence of hostility to all creatures in deed, thought, and word; helping others; and giving in charity.

67 Never do anything for one’s own benefit that does not also benefit others; never do anything that is shameful;

68 Never do anything for the sake of public praise. O most excellent Kaurava! This in brief is the essence of character.

69 O king! *Tāta*! Dear one! It can happen that characterless individuals become prosperous, but they never enjoy their prosperity for long, and they find themselves uprooted.

70 *Tāta*! Dear one! If you are looking for a prosperity excelling even that of Yudhiṣṭhira, learn from this, and cultivate the qualities of character.”

71 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira (said Bhīṣma), this was the advice of lord-of-men Dhṛtarāṣṭra to his son. You can follow it also, and savour its fruits.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-FIVE

1 “According to you, Pitāmaha,” Yudhiṣṭhira said, “*śīla* or character is the primary requirement for a man. What about hope? What is hope? This I would like to know.

2 “Pitamāha! You who conquer the cities of enemies! This poses a mahā-problem for me. I do not know of anyone better than you who can give me an answer.

3 Such mahā-hopes I had for Suyodhana-Duryodhana, O Pitāmahā! I hoped, *prabhu*-lord, that he would do the right thing before the fighting began, and give me my share of the kingdom.

4 What mahā-hopes lie in every human heart! And how terrible is the disappointment when hopes die – a disappointment like death itself.

5 O Indra-among-rājās! What a fool I was! That wicked-ātmaned son of Dhṛtarāṣṭra shattered every hope I had. Just look!

6 Rājā, to me hope is even taller than a mahā-mountain blessed with towering trees, it is as infinite as the spacious sky itself.

7 O excellent Kaurava! It is inconceivable, hard to understand, hard to cherish. I do not see anything harder to cherish and nourish than hope."

8 Bhīṣma replied: There is a historical story about this, Yudhiṣṭhira, to which you should listen carefully. It's about the discussion between Sumitra and Ṛṣabha.

9 Sumitra was a rāja-ṛṣi of the Haihayas. After wounding a deer with a knotted arrow in the course of a hunt, he gave it hot chase.

10 It was a valiant deer indeed. Though wounded, it sped away fast – and it was pursued fast too by the powerful rājā.

11 How swiftly it sped, O Indra-among-rājās, bounding over rough terrain before coming to a long flat stretch of land.

12 The rājā was young, and boundless was his energy and his strength. Wielding his bow and arrows, encased in armour, he continued the chase.

13 Wading through *nadā*-male-rivers and splashing through *nadi*-female-streams, leaping over rivulets and speeding through woods, that creature of the forest managed to keep well ahead.

14 It seemed, O rājā, that the deer enjoyed teasing the king, pausing briefly to let the king catch up, and then fleeting ahead.

15 Despite the arrows sticking to his body, the deer continued to play hide-and-seek with the king, O Indra-among-rājās.

16 He was a leader of his herd, a fleet-footed creature, O Indra-among-rājās, and he went on provoking the king with his playful antics.

17 Finally, the king fitted a fierce, fatal last arrow to his excellent bow, and fired it at the deer.

18 The leader of the herd saw the arrow speeding towards him, and bounded away to safety a full cow-grazing field away, and seemed to be smiling at the king's discomfiture.

19 The arrow, flaming fiercely, slid harmlessly in the earth. The deer rushed inside a mahā-forest. The rājā continued the chase.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SIX

1 The rājā also (continued Bhīṣma) entered the depths of the mahā-forest. He was tired, and he rested in an āśrama of tapasyā-practisers.

2 Not only was he utterly exhausted, he was famished also. Seeing the royal bowman, the ṛṣis of the āśrama approached him and welcomed him with pūjā-respect.

3 The lord of men acknowledged the pūjā-respect of the ṛṣis, and enquired if the tapasyā and rituals were proceeding as they should.

4 The rich-in-tapasyā inmates were pleased with the rājā's concern, and asked the tiger-brave king the purpose of his visit.

5 "O lord of men!" they said. "What desire for auspicious goodness brings you to this forest-of-tapasyā *tapovana*, on foot, armed with bow and arrows and sword?

6 O gracious bestower of honours! From where have you come? Which royal family is yours? And what is your name? Please tell us."

7 O bull-brave Bharata mortal! Rājā Sumitra gave the twice-born enquirers all the details they wanted.

8 "I was born in the Haihaya family. My name is Sumitra, son of Mitra and delighter of my friends. I have been hunting herds of deer with thousands of arrows.

9 I have a mahā-military force protecting me and my retinue, my ministers and my wives. But there is this wounded deer who continues to elude me.

10 Chasing it, I have come here. All my royal glory is gone. I am frustrated. I cannot do what I set out to do.

11 I have tried hard, very hard – and failed. And here I am, among you, a disappointed man. What can be more miserable than this?

12 O you who are rich in tapasyā! Losing a city, losing all my royal regalia does not pain me as much as this feeling of utter hopelessness.

13 Impossible to weigh the mahā-mountain-range of the Himālayas, impossible to fathom the vast depth of the mahā-cean, impossible to measure the spaciousness of the sky.

14 O you who are rich in tapasyā and you who know all there is to know, you will know what it means to be utterly without hope.

15 Because you are so excellently mahā-fortune-favoured, I will ask you something which worries me: Vast-hoping man, vast sky-space –

16 Which is more vast? Which mahān is more mahān? You must clarify this. Which is harder to attain – vast hope or vast sky?

17 O finest of the twice-born! If this is not a special secret, then I would like to know – not otherwise.

18 But if my question in any way goes against your practise of tapasyā, I take it back. If, however, it opens up new areas of question-and-answer,

19 Then I would like to know the cause and the reason and everything else about hope. After all, you are so deeply immersed in tapasyā, you should be able to enlighten me."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-SEVEN

1 Then (continued Bhīṣma) that finest of all ṛṣis named Rṣabha smiled gently and said to him in the midst of that assembly of ṛṣis:

2 "O tiger-among-rājās, this happened a long time ago, during one of my *tīrtha*-pilgrimages when I arrived at the celestial āśrama of *prabhu* Nara-Nārāyaṇa.

3 This is the place where the enchanting *badarī* jujube tree grows, the place of the lake in the wind-and-the-sky, the Vaihāyasa, the place, O rājā, where Aśvaśira-Hayagrīva recited the Vedas.

4 I bathed in the lake, after which I offered *tarpaṇa*-oblations to the *pitṛs* and the gods before entering the āśrama,

5 Which is the permanent abode of the ṛṣis Nara-and-Nārāyaṇa. From there I proceeded to another āśrama, intending to stay there.

6 An old, frail ṛṣi of that forest-of-tapasyā abode approached me. His name was Tanu, and he was in rags and a deerskin,

7 O mahā-muscled one! He seemed to be eight times taller than other men. O rāja-ṛṣi! I had never seen such a thin, long man!

8 His body – as thin as one's little finger! And truly weird, O Indra-among-rājās, were his neck, arms, legs and hair.

9 Not just those – his head, his ear, his eyes – equally weird! And his way of speaking, his gestures too, O incomparable rājā!

10 I was frightened at first, and shocked, seeing that skin-and-bones Brahmin. Then I bowed at his feet, and folded my palms in *prāñjali*.

11 O bull-brave one! I mentioned my name, my family-*gotra*, my father's name, and sat down on a seat which he indicated to me.

12 It was then, mahārāja, that that finest-of-long-and-lean knowers of dharma began discoursing on dharma-and-artha in that assembly of ṛṣis through a series of kathā-stories.

13 He had hardly begun telling his story than a lotus-eyed rājā turned up at the āśrama with an entire army and all his wives.

14 Vīradyumna was the name of that mahā-illustrious king, and he was agitatedly searching for his son Bhūridyumna who had gone to the forest and disappeared.

15 'I am going to find my son here! I know he is here!' That earth-lord rājā kept repeating this and nursing his hope.

16 ‘How he cherished dharma! I know it will be difficult, but I will find my son! My only son -- and lost in the forest!

17 I see him – I see him, my lost son, in my mind! I will find him – even if I have to face death in doing so.’

18 When he heard the lament of the king, finest-of-munis Tanu lowered his head and seemed to be lost in deep thought.

19 The sight of the muni plunged in deep thought troubled the king. Speaking haltingly, the rājā said:

20 ‘O deva-ṛṣi! Is it really going to be so very difficult? Is there anything more powerful than mahā-hope? If this not something that should not be kept secret, *bhagavan*, tell me.’

21 The muni replied: ‘Call it misfortune, but once in the past a *bhagavan* mahā-ṛṣi was insulted by your son – a foolish deed.

22 The ṛṣi had asked your son, O rājā, to give him a a golden pot and some bark samples. Your son refused, and the ṛṣi lost all hope.

23 O finest-of-men! (continued Ṛṣabha) The dharmātmā king Vīrabhadra heard the world-pūjā-respected ṛṣi’s words, bowed before him, and remained as depressed as you are.

24 The mahā-ṛṣi honoured the rājā by offering him *arghya*-water hospitality, along with other rites observed by forest-dwellers.

25 O tiger-brave hero! Then the munis sat in a circle around bull-brave Vīradyumna like the seven sages of the Saptaṛṣi constellation clustering around the Pole Star Dhruva.

26 That was the occasion when they gathered round the never-defeated-in-battle-rājā, and enquired from him the reason for his entering the āśrama in the forest.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-EIGHT

1 The rājā said, "I am a rājā famed all over. My name is Vīradyumna, and I am searching in the forest for Bhūridyumna, my lost son.

2 O blameless ones! He is my only son, just a boy. I have scoured the forest for him, but I have failed to find him."

3 O rājā! (said Ṛṣabha) The muni lowered his head, and did not answer the king.

4 O Indra-among-rājās! In the past this Brahmin had been insulted by the rājā, and with severe tapasyā he had diminished his own hopes.

5 "I will never expect anything from kings, or from any caste. High hoping makes an adult behave like a silly child.

6 I refuse to be silly. I will be firm in my tapasyā." Vīrabhadra once again questioned that finest of all munis:

7 "*Bhagavān*! You know all about dharma and artha. How can one reduce one's hopes? Is anything more difficult than that?

8 Recalling the past incidents, the *bhagavan* ṛṣi with the long-and-lean body reminded the rājā of what had happened.

9 "O king," said the ṛṣi, "nothing is more difficult than reducing hope. Precisely because this is so, I have approached many kings and verified that it is so."

10 "Brahmin," said the rājā, "I see now how difficult it is to reduce or not-reduce hope. I accept it as a truth of the very Vedas itself.

11 O mahā-wise one! O muni! One doubt is still in my heart which I beg of you to please remove. I earnestly ask you this.

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12 O finest of all munis! *Bhagavān*! If this is not something you want to keep private and secret, can you please enlighten me if there is anything that is more reduced and lean and shrunk than your body."

13 The long-and-lean one replied: "Very hard is it to satisfy a person who hopes and asks. There's no such person. Dear one, *tāta*, even harder to find is the person who does not dislike a person who comes and asks for a favour.

14 Even more reduced and lean and shrunk than I am is the hope of a father that he will find an only son who for some reason has been lost or who has gone abroad.

15 Even more reduced and lean and shrunk than I am is the hope of a person who waits for help from a person who has said he would help but is unable to do so, and the hope of the deserving man who does not get what he deserves.

16 Even more reduced and lean and shrunk than I am is the hope that is reposed in assistance from an ungrateful, a lazy, or a wicked person.

17 O Indra-among-men! Slimmer than I am is the hope of an elderly woman to bear children, and the hope of rich men to gather infinite riches.

18 Slimmer also is the hope of marriage cherished by a young girl as soon as she hears others talking of happy marriages."

19 O rājā! Hearing these words of the bull-brave twice-born ṛṣi, the rājā, along with his wives, bowed low and touched the ṛṣi's feet with their heads.

20 "What you say, *bhagavan*, revered one," said the rājā, "is true. Favour me with your grace. I would like to meet my son.

21 I have no doubt at all that whatever you say is right." The finest of knowers-of-dharma, the *bhagavān* ṛṣi smiled,

22 And by the power of his tapasyā and insight into *śruti*-learning, he quickly brought the boy there, and rebuked the king.

23 Having brought the boy before his earth-lord father, that finest-of-all-knowers-of-dharma revealed himself as the embodiment of Dharma.

24 Having given a darshan of his divine form, the ṛṣi Tanu, free of all faults and free of anger, retired to a nearby forest.

25 I saw all this, O rājā (continued Ṛṣabha), and heard it too. So my advice is that you should also give up your hope, which is even slimmer than Tanu.

26 Bhīṣma said: After listening to mahā-ātmaned Ṛṣabha, Sumitra abandoned all hope which was reducing his body to Tanu-like thinness.

27 Mahārāja Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira! Listen to me. Calm yourself. Be firm and steady like the Himālaya mountains.

28 Debilitated by distress and remorse, you questioned me. I answered you. It is up to you now to overcome your agitation.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED TWENTY-NINE

1 "Never do I tire listening to what you say," said Yudhiṣṭhira. "Your words are like *amṛta*-nectar. O Bharata descendant! I am like a person never satiated with the bliss of his sva-ātman.

2 O Pitāmaha! Speak to me again about dharma. When I listen to you, I feel as if I am drinking the very nectar of dharma; the more I drink, the more I want to drink."

3 In this connection (replied Bhīṣma), there is the ancient historical story of the dialogue between Gautāma and mahātmā Yama.

4 Gautama had a mahā-āshram in the mountain range called the Pariyatra. Let me tell you how long he lived in that āshram.

5 Gautama practised tapasyā there for sixty thousand years. It so happened once, while that supreme mahā-muni was deep in the practice of his rigorous tapasyā,

6 O tiger-among-men Yudhiṣṭhira, the world-guardian Lokapāla Yama passed by and saw ṛṣi Gautama absorbed in his severe tapasyā.

7 Brahmā-ṛṣi Gautama, by his special insight, knew it was Yama; tapasyā-wealthy Gautama respectfully did *prāñjali* before Yama.

8 Dharma-rāja Yama took notice of the bull-brave twice-born ṛṣi, greeted him, and asked, "I am Dharma. What can I do for you?"

9 Gautama asked, "How can one free oneself from the debt one owes to one's father and mother? How does one attain the pure realms of heaven that are so difficult to attain?"

10 Yama replied: "Honour your mother and father by always cherishing truth and dharma, by tapasyā and purity. Give your parents this pūjā-respect.

11
> And if a man desires to attain
> the wonderful heavenly worlds,
> he should devote himself
> to the performance of Aśvamedhas
> and at those Horse-Sacrifices
> offer liberal *dakṣiṇā*-gifts to the priests."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY

1 "O Bharata!" asked Yudhiṣṭhira. "What should a rājā do who is beset by foes, whose allies have left him, whose army is weak, and whose treasury is depleted,

2 Whose ministers are corrupt, whose secrets have been leaked out, who fears he might lose his kingdom, who sees no way out of his crisis,

3 Who is assailed by a coalition of foes when he is engaged in attacking, who is the target of a very powerful king when his own condition is weak,

4 Who finds himself unable to work out terms of conciliation, who is unable to meet the demands of time and place, who is unable to sow disunity among his enemies? Should he give up his life in desperation? What should he do?"

5 Bhīṣma replied: O bull-brave Bharata! O son-of-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira! You ask a difficult and subtle question. I would not dare to give an opinion in this matter of dharma, had you not questioned me.

6 O bull-brave Bharata! Dharma is more complex than words and intelligent thinking. A man may become good by respecting *śruti*-wisdom and living righteously.

7 Intelligent thinking may lead to action that makes a person rich, or it may not. This is a problem that you will have to decide for yourself, by yourself.

8 Let me, however, tell you, O Bharata, about dharma-ways that lead to artha-success; but this does not imply I approve of such dharma-means.

9 You can high-handedly amass wealth for a depleted treasury by exploiting your subjects, but the learned are agreed that this is self-ruining in the long run.

10 The śāstras a person reads determine the quality of knowledge and learning that he absorbs and passes on to others.

11 Knowing the śāstras is not enough to help a man overcome a crisis; but not knowing them is worse. Only the right action leads to the desired result.

12 Don't be cynical and don't be critical about what I am saying. The fact is that when a rājā's treasury diminishes, his power diminishes.

13 Like water pumped into a wasteland, a rājā should squeeze wealth out of his people by any means when in difficulty; then return it to the people. This is Sanātana Dharma, the recommended practice of all kings, always.

14 The dharma of prosperity, O Bharata, is one thing; the dharma of crisis another. First treasury, then dharma; dharma depends on life, life depends on prosperity.

15 Dharma is not always enough to provide the means and sustenance of life. It is clear that dharma is powerless to give you that kind of power –

16 Which is why adharma takes on the shape of dharma in times of crisis. But learned idealists insist that going against dharma in a crisis is also adharma.

17 Crisis over, what should a Kṣatriya do? He should not do anything that damages his dharma. His primary duty is that he must not allow his enemies to get the upper hand by weakening himself.

18 In a crisis, there is no point in thinking of one's own dharma or another's dharma; the important thing is how to save oneself from ruin, at any cost.

19 *Tāta*! Dear one! Very clear on this dharma are the views of dharma-knowers. According to śruti-wisdom, a Kṣatriya's prosperity lies in his physical strength.

20 O Bharata descendant! What can a penurious Kṣatriya do to survive except appropriate the wealth of all, Brahmins and tapasyā-practisers excluded?

21 This is acceptable – just as it is acceptable for a Brahmin to perform the yajña of a person whose yajña should not be performed, or eat forbidden food – but only if the Brahmin is in dire distress.

22 What door is closed for a desperate man? What means of escape is improper for a prisoner? A man stricken with calamity needs no door to escape.

23 You cannot expect a Kṣatriya who has lost his treasury and his army to go about begging, or live like a Vaiśya or a Śūdra.

24 But if one cannot survive by following one's sva-dharma, then it is permitted, for the sake of survival, that a different profession is followed.

25 In dire distress of that order, one can go against the principles of one's dharma. We have seen this happen in the cases of livelihood-threatened Brahmins.

26 Then why not Kṣatriyas? Let them take wealth from those more prosperous than they are. Let a Kṣatriya, on no account, ruin himself.

27 The Kṣatriyas are reputed to be the protectors and killers of people. Let them, therefore, protect by taking by force the wherewithal with which to protect.

28 It is impossible, O raja, for anyone to survive without in some way harming others. Even the muni in the forest, living all by himself, lives by living off others.

29 O incomparable Kuru! No one survives saying, "It's written on any forehead, it's my destiny," specially a ruler whose mission in life is to protect people.

30 It's a mutual dependence – rājā protecting people, people protecting rājā. This is the eternal duty. This is Sanātana Dharma.

31 Just as a rājā lavishes wealth in order to protect his kingdom, the kingdom's subjects should give their everything to protect their rājā.

32 If a famine strikes, a rājā should never hide from his subjects his treasury, system of justice, army, allies, and any other possessions.

33 The wise who know dharma say that one should save the seed even from the food one eats. This is also the advice of the mahā-māyā *asura* Śambara.

34 *Dhik*! Shame on the rājā from his kingdom subjects migrate to foreign lands in order to earn their living. Shame on such a kingdom also!

35 The twin roots of a rājā are his treasury and his army. The treasury in fact is the root of the army. The army is the root of all dharmas, and dharma is the root of all people.

36 It is not possible to acquire wealth without in some way afflicting people. No wealth, no army. So a rājā is excused if he hurts people in order to acquire wealth.

37 Many irregularities take place during the performance of sacred yajñas. Similarly, a rājā cannot be blamed for excesses in wealth-collection.

38 An intelligent man knows when to do what for a good end, when to do what goes against a good end, and when to do what will lead to an evil end.

39 You can act for the success of the complete yajña, or for the non-success of the yajña, or for part-success of the yajña – it's all done for the yajña.

40 Let me give you an example of what dharma really is. To make a yajña-pole a large tree is cut down.

41 In the process of felling this large tree, other trees are also cut down. As they topple, they fall on other smaller trees, which are destroyed.

42 O smiter of foes! To amass a mahā-treasury, all those who obstruct it will have to be removed. I do not see how else is success possible.

43 It is wealth that makes possible conquest of both the worlds – this and the next. Truth and dharma belong to the person who has wealth.

44 O Bharata descendant! Get wealth for a yajña by any means. No blame will attach to you, whether you do what should be done or what should not be done.

45 O rājā! O lord of the earth! The same person cannot simultaneously be rich and poor. I do not see a rich man living in a forest.

46 Everyone in this world competes for wealth: "This is mine! This is mine! This will be mine!" That is what motivates all people.

47 O foe-chastiser! There is no dharma greater for a rājā than the welfare of his kingdom. The dharma I am discussing is applicable only in times of crisis, not at other times.

48 There are many ways of acquiring wealth: gifts, karma-sacrificial yajñas, tapasyās, intelligence, and industriousness.

49 To be weak is to be without wealth. Wealth is power. Wealth makes everything possible. The man with money overcomes all difficulties.

50 It is the treasury that gets you dharma and kāma and the other world, and this world as well. But try to fill that treasury by following dharma, not adharma.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-ONE

1 "O Bharata descendant," asked Yudhiṣṭhira, "his kingdom is weak and collapsing, he keeps endlessly delaying decisive action, he is excessively worried about his family, he suspects his ministers;

2 His kingdom is split into divisive factions, and he lacks money and resources, and consequently his allies also are not very helpful,

3 He is harassed by a coalition of enemy kingdoms, he is at a loss on how to confront hostile forces since he is so weak – in such a condition, what is there left for a king to do?"

4 Bhīṣma replied: If the invading conqueror respects dharma and artha, and is straightforward, then peace terms should be swiftly agreed upon, and the invader persuaded to relinquish the occupied territories.

5 If the invader follows adharma and is wicked-minded, make peace with him swiftly, and surrender to him the territories he has occupied, a part of them.

6 If he refuses to make peace, abandon your capital and escape with your life, in the hope that some day you will recover your lost territories.

7 Treasury and army are dispensable in a crisis. Which man will not prefer to escape with his life if he knows anything at all about dharma and artha?

8 If the palace ladies cannot be protected and fall in the enemy's hands, waste no tender feelings over them. Above all is the safety of your own person.

9 Yudhiṣṭhira asked: "What should a king do whose subjects are discontented, treasury depleted, kingdom attacked, and military secrets exposed?"

10 Bhīṣma replied: Let him immediately make peace, or strike hard against the enemy. Should he die fighting bravely, the realm of heaven is his.

11 Even with a handful of loyal warriors, who are confident and dedicated, an earth-lord can regain his lordship of the earth.

12 If he dies in battle, he goes to heaven. If he kills his enemy, he gains the earth. To die on the battlefield is to gain the realm of Śakra-Indra.

13 Alternatively, a weak king can try to influence those who are friends with his enemy, and by gaining their confidence persuade them to convince his enemy to halt the invasion.

14 And, of course, he can always speak sweetly with the ministers of his enemy, and work out a means of his own escape and safety. After some time, he can plan to recover the territories that he has been forced to surrender.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-TWO

1 Yudhiṣṭhira asked: "When dharma and world-welfare activities decline, when all means of livelihood are in the hands of robbers and barbarians,

2 In such a calamitous situation, Pitāmaha, what should a Brahmin do who, because he loves them, cannot desert his sons and grandsons?"

3 Bhīṣma replied: Should things come to such a pass, let him use the power of discerning intelligence that is *vijñāna*. Everything in this world is for those who are good, not for those who are not good.

4 That person knows crisis-dharma who takes wealth from the not-good and gives it to the good; he is the bridge between the good and not-good.

5 For the stability of his kingdom, a king can say, "I am taking this, to give it away," in case it is not offered voluntarily, provided he does not offend the loyalty of the dispossessed subjects.

6 How can one find fault with a man who uses the wisdom of discernment which has purified an action that might otherwise be condemned?

7 Those who use the power of discriminating intelligence, Yudhiṣṭhira, do not find pleasure in anything else. Power has its own radiance.

8 Ordinary people follow the rules of the śāstras in the ordinary, accepted way. A learned man always interprets them with discrimination.

9 *Ṛtviks*, purohitas, ācāryas, and Brahmins, dignified or not, should never be exploited. To do so is wrong, and it harms the person who does it.

10 These criteria are world-wide. They are the eternal vigilant eye. They are the means by which one can tell what is good and what is not-good.

11 Say, villagers or town-dwellers hurl accusations at each other, from jealousy or anger. No rājā should reward or punish on the basis of hearsay evidence.

12 Never speak slander. Never listen to slander. When slander is spoken, shut your ears, or leave the room.

13 O lord-of-men! Slander is spoken by the wicked and the beastly. The good and the noble always speak of the good and noble *guṇas* of others.

14 Surely the king should be like a pair of well-trained oxen who bear burdens gracefully and willingly, as he bears the necessary burden of running a kingdom.

15 Some, of course, say that a king should behave in a manner that attracts allies. According to them, correctness is the finest sign of dharma.

16 Others do not agree. They go with the view of Śaṅkha and Likhita that even Brahmins should be punished; they say this without malice or envy.

17 Ṛṣis, indeed, have declared that even teachers, who are guilty of wrongdoing, should be punished. There is no other authority, however, for this.

18 The gods do punish incorrigible wrong-doers. He who amasses wealth by fraud, violates dharma.

19 The person who knows the four bases of dharma – logic, Veda, artha, justice – is the one who knows dharma. It is as difficult to know the basis of dharma as it is to know how many feet a snake has.

20 If you want to know the nature of dharma, follow the trail of dharma as you follow the drops of blood of an arrow-pierced deer.

21 Walk the path, Yudhiṣṭhira, which the good and the pious have walked in the past, and walk it humbly. This has always been the path of the rāja-ṛṣis.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-THREE

1 Bhīṣma continued: A king should augment his treasury from the resources of his own kingdom or from another's kingdom. Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira, from the treasury springs dharma, from the treasury spread the roots of the kingdom's progress.

2 The treasury must always be full; it must always be replenished, and carefully protected. This is the eternal rule, the Sanātana Dharma.

3 The treasury cannot be filled by totally pure means or by oppressive measures. A middle course has to be employed to ensure a plentiful treasury.

4 A weak king and a treasury – how can that be? How an army with no treasury? How a kingdom without an army? How the goddess of prosperity Śrī without a kingdom?

5 For a prosperous man to become poor is like death. That is why a rājā is always in need of a treasury, an army, and allies if he wishes to prosper.

6 People laugh at a rājā whose treasury is empty. They are not satisfied with the little that he offers, and they work for him reluctantly.

7 It is Śrī the goddess of prosperity who empowers a rājā. Prosperity conceals his wrong-doing, just as a dress covers a woman's private parts.

8 People slighted by a rājā burn up inside when they see him prospering. They follow him like dogs, waiting for a chance to harm him.

9 O descendant of Bharata! How can all this ever make a rājā happy? That is why a rājā should always keep striving for continual excellence – such striving is a sign of manliness.

10 He should break if need be, but never bend. Let him go and live with the beasts in a forest if he has to,

11 But let him never give in to barbarians in his court who defy tradition and defile values. The barbarians, O Bharata, will manipulate the army to carry out their vile depredations.

12 People fear tradition-defiers. Barbarians fear only a person who shows no compassion.

13 So a king should establish such traditions as make his subjects happy. Even the littlest good tradition is pūjā-respected by people.

14 There are those who say this world is nothing, nor is the next world. These nothing-believers are fearful – they should never be trusted.

15 Even barbarians have a code of conduct – some loot and pillage but do not kill, and those who adhere to the code, cultivate tender feelings also.

16 Killing a non-combatant, ravishing another's wife, showing ingratitude, robbing a Brahmin of his belongings, looting and leaving nothing behind even for bare sustenance,

17 Abducting women, attacking and occupying entire villages as their lords – are condemned even by barbarians. Adultery is also shunned by them.

18 It is important to know the ways of barbarians and win their confidence before taking action against them with the objective of destroying them.

19 It is also important for barbarians to realise that wholesale loot and pillage is not to their advantage. Let them not declare, "I am all-powerful," and commit atrocities indiscriminately.

20 Barbarians who do not indulge in outright looting are themselves spared extermination; those who loot with wild recklessness will always live in fear of being wiped out.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FOUR

1 Bhīṣma continued: Those who are conversant with the past give the following advice about the practice of dharma: For a learned Kṣatriya, the connection between dharma and artha is eminently clear.

2 A Kṣatriya should not get lost in tortuous details on the nature of dharma. "This is dharma, this is adharma" – is as difficult to know as guess from a wolf's paw-prints if they are a tiger's or a dog's.

3 No one has seen the fruits of dharma and aadharma in this world. A Kṣatriya should aim to acquire power. Power is everything.

4 The powerful man enjoys prosperity, army, and ministers. The poor man is like nothing. To have just a little wealth is like eating defiled remnants.

5 Fear of a powerful man prevents people from accusing him of wrong-doing. When power and dharma combine with truth, one gets saved from mahā-peril.

6 In my opinion, power excels dharma, because dharma depends on power. All moving life is stable on earth, so dharma is stable on power.

7 Wind decides where smoke goes; power decides how dharma moves. Dharma needs the support of power, like a creeper needs the support of a tree.

8 Those who can afford luxuries have access to enjoyment; those who have power can practise dharma. Nothing is impossible for the powerful. Always blameless and pure are the powerful.

9 There is no protector for a powerless man who happens to do wrong. His very presence alarms people, as would the sight of a wolf.

10 Shame and grief are the lot of a man who falls from power. A life of shame and reproach – what else is it but death?

11 People whisper about a powerless man: "The result of his wickedness! His friends and relatives have abandoned him!" Such burning words, such arrowy words!

12 According to ācāryas, expiation from such a condition requires the following: Study diligently the three V[illegible] attend humbly on the twice-born Brahmins

13 Please them with sweet words and helpful deeds, be mahā-*manā* large-minded, marry in a mahā-kula highborn family,

14 Say, "I am happy to be of service," praise the guṇa-glories of others, chant *japa*-mantras and bathe daily as ordained for ablutions, behave with dignity, speak as little as possible,

15 And seek the approval of Brahmins and Kṣatriyas. Let a habitual wrong-doer do this, never minding what unkind remarks are passed on him.

16 A person doing this will soon recover his lost respect, and enjoy prestige again, provided he persists in his dedicated conduct.

17 He will be pūjā-respected in this world and the next, and enjoy the mahā-fruits of both.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-FIVE

1 In this connection (continued Bhīṣma) is an ancient story of a barbarian who followed a code of conduct and so was saved from ruin after his death.

2 Skilled in attacking, brave, intelligent, learned-in-śruti, not cruel, protector of the dharma of āśrama-inmates, devoted to Brahmins, pūjā-respecting his gurus,

3 The son of a Niṣāda mother and Kṣatriya father, his name was Kāyavya, and he dedicated himself to cherishing and protecting Kṣatriya dharma.

4 Day and night he hunted and tormented the forest animals. A brilliant Niṣāda, he knew all there is to know about the ways of forest creatures.

5 He knew every little corner of the forest. He roamed the Pāriyātra hill, he knew the dharmas of all creatures, his weapons were perfect, he never missed.

6 He could easily rout an army of hundreds and thousands, singlehanded. He passed his days in that mahā-forest, looking after his father and mother, who were deaf and dumb, with deep pūjā-respect.

7 He brought honey for them, and meat, and roots and fruits and other forest food, honouring them and caring for them in every possible way.

8 Not only that – he also pūjā-respected all the Brahmins who had retired to the forest, visiting their abodes daily with offerings of food.

9 Well, one day a horde of thousands of cruel, culture-less code-violating barbarians chose him to be the leader of their gang.

10 The barbarians said, "You are wise, you are brave, strict-vowed, a time-place-action expert. We respect you. We want you to be our leader.

11 Whatever you tell us, we will do exactly that. Look after us as you do your mother and father."

12 Kāyavya replied: "To begin with, never harm a woman, a weakling, a child, and a practiser-of-tapasyā. Never kill a non-combatant. Never forcibly abduct a woman.

13 Never must any one of you be guilty of killing a woman. Always keep in mind the welfare of Brahmins. Fight to protect them, if that is called for.

14 Never waste a standing crop. Never obstruct a marriage ritual. Never interfere with pūjā-homage paid to gods, *pitṛs*, and guests.

15 Special exemption is given to Brahmins from your loot and pillage. Even if you have to give away everything, you must protect them.

16 The point is that there is no one in the three worlds who can save a person who incurs the wrath of a Brahmin.

17 The ruin of a person who reviles a Brahmin is as sure as the dispelling of darkness by the rising sun.

18 Stay here, and enjoy whatever fruits accrue from staying here. Attack all who refuse to part with their possessions voluntarily.

19 The aim of punishment is to chastise wicked wrong-doers, not to glorify oneself. Those who punish the good deserve to be themselves executed.

20 And those who seek to benefit themselves at the expense of the kingdom, they are like maggots festering in a corpse.

21 Even a barbarian can be redeemed and can find fulfilment if he abides by the rules of the dharma-śāstras."

22 It so happened (continued Bhīṣma) that the barbarians followed Kāyavya's advice, and they prospered, abandoning their wicked ways.

23 If a person constantly refers to this story of Kāyavya, he will never have to fear any creature of the forest; in fact, he will not have to fear any living creature.

24 O Bharata descendant! He will fear no one, not even the wickedest person. He becomes, O rājā, a veritable lord of the forest.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SIX

1 Concerning this matter of how a rājā should augment his treasury (continued Bhīṣma), there is ancient recommendation in the form of *githa*-verses known as the Brahmā-gītā.

2 The wealth of all involved in the performance of yajñas must not be touched, nor the wealth consecrated to the gods as their property. The wealth of barbarians and of those who do not perform yajñas can be taken by a Kṣatriya.

3 O Bharata! The kingdom and its people are a Kṣatriya's feast. All wealth belongs to a Kṣatriya, and to no one else.

4 But the wealth is meant for the army and the performance of yajñas. After all, inedible plants are cut and cooked and made palatable.

5 Men who know dharma say wealth is useless in the hands of those who do not worship gods and *pitṛs* and do not light the sacred fire;

6 And so, O rājā, it is perfectly acceptable for an earth-lord to appropriate it for the kingdom's welfare – but never for his personal benefit.

7 A king who takes from the impious and ignoble to give to the pious and noble is like a valuable bridge, and must be considered as a person who knows the essence of dharma.

8 A king's power should grow effortlessly, like the growth of plants and trees.

9 Yajñas proliferate, often for no clear reason,

10 Like colonies of ants. Weed out the useless ones, like fleas and mosquitoes, and keep the true-dharma ones.

11 The more you reflect on dharma, the more subtle it becomes – as fine and supple as soft *ulapa* grass sprouting everywhere, like dust, as it were.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-SEVEN

1 Bhīṣma continued: Two kinds of people find happiness – who plan for the future, and who are prepared for the present. Those who delay are ruined.

2 There is an excellent little story about a person who could not make up his mind on what he should do and what he should not do. Listen to the story.

3 There was this pond, a shallow pond, Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira, in which lived three very clever fishes, swimming around, three very close friends.

4 One planned for the future. One was prepared for the present. The third kept putting off things.

5 Some fishermen turned up at the pond one day, and busied about digging channels to drain it dry.

6 Aware of impending disaster, the fish who loved planning for the future said to his two friends:

7 "I can see the calamity that's going to fall on us and all the other pond-inmates. Before it's too late, and there's no way left for us to escape, let's leave the pond.

8 Safe is he who tackles the future with sensible planning. Listen to me, please. Think it over – let's leave soon."

9 The fish who loved putting off things said: "What you say is very well meant, but if you ask me, what's the hurry?"

10 The fish who was always prepared for the present said: "Let what will happen, happen. When it happens, I will deal with it."

11 The fish who loved planning for the future heard both his friends, and quietly slipped out by a convenient channel and entered another pond.

12 The fishermen went about their business and drained the pond, and netted a very fine catch of all the fish in it.

13 Not very much water was left in the pond, and netted with all the other fish was the always procrastinating let's-do-it-later.

14 And when the fishermen hauled the net in, flapping and trapped in it was also the always-prepared-for-the-present.

15 But he had the presence of mind to slip in with the other fish of the catch by biting at a string of the net and allowing himself to be dragged out along with the rest of the catch.

16 When the fishermen pulled the net out and began removing the trapped fish, he quickly wriggled away into the waters of a nearby pond.

17 But it was the stupid, senseless, endlessly procrastinating fish for whom there was nothing left except death.

18 Cosmic Time Kāla devours the man who is so deluded as not to act when he should, like the doomed delaying fish.

19 And the man who thinks himself to be very clever and waits for things to happen exposes himself to grave danger, like the I-am-prepared-for-the-present fish.

20 Only the future planner and the cool-headed present tackler – these two – find success and happiness. The procrastinater is doomed.

21 *Kāṣṭhās, kalas, muhūrtas,* days, nights, *lavas,* months, *pakṣas,* the six seasons, *kalpas, samvatsaras* –

22 These divisions of time make up Kāla, and *deśa* or earth is the territory of Kāla. Kāla is invisible. Invisible too are plans and decisions.

23 The *ṛṣis* stress *deśa* and Kāla, place and time, in all śāstras of dharma, artha, and mokṣa. These are basic to succeeding in kāma as well.

24 The competent, carefully thinking person always keeps in mind the primacy of time and place, and plans accordingly, and that is the way he tastes the fruits of success.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-EIGHT

1 "O bull-brave Bharata!" Yudhiṣṭhira said. "You have explained how planning for the future and facing the present are superior, and how ruinous is procrastination.

2 I would now like to know from you, O bull-brave Bharata, about the intelligence by which a rājā is able to overcome his enemies, though encircled by them,

3 Granting, of course, that he is well-acquainted with dharma and artha and the dharma-śāstras. O finest of the Kurus! Enlighten me on this.

4 What should an earth-lord do when assailed by a multiplicity of enemies? I would like to know what the tradition has to say on this.

5 Many erstwhile enemies join forces against a rājā when he is facing difficulties, and strive to bring about his downfall.

6 When a whole host of such mahā-powerful foes combine against a rājā whose position is weak, what can he singly do in order to face their attacks?

7 How should he deal with his friends and his foes in such a crisis, O bull-brave Bharata, what means employ?

8 Who earlier showed all the signs of friendship, has turned out to be a foe? How can one be happy in such a situation?

9 Confront who? Conciliate who? And how deal with a very powerful ruler who has sided with your enemies against you?

10 O scorcher of foes! This is the problem of all problems. And who is most competent to explain to a hard-to-find willing listener its difficult complexities except you,

11 O Śāntanu's son Bhīṣma, O mahā-fortune-favoured one, you who are wedded to the truth and whose senses are fully disciplined?"

12 Bhīṣma replied: O Bharata Yudhiṣṭhira! You have asked a question deserving a worthy answer. Listen to the secret of how to deal with such crises.

13 The way things are, foes become friends, and friends become foes. Relationships change when circumstances change.

14 So keep time and place in mind when you have to trust or distrust anyone. Time and place determine what should be done and what should not be done.

15 Think of your good, O Bharata, and make friends always with the cultured and intelligent. When it's a question of survival, make friends even with an enemy.

16 The fool who never makes friends with his enemy will never succeed when he should, and never enjoy the fruits that others enjoy.

17 In fact, mahā-fruits are his who, knowing what is best for him, makes friends with his foes and distances himself from his friends.

18 It's in this connection you have an ancient historical story of the conversation between a cat and a mouse under a *nyagrodha*-banyan.

19 In the middle of a mahā-forest was this magnificent mahā-banyan, draped with creepers, and home to all kinds of nesting birds.

20 What massive trunks it had! It was like a huge sheltering cloud under whose cool shade lived many species of wild animals.

21 At the foot of this banyan, in a burrow with a hundred outlets, lived a mahā-wise mouse. His name was Palita.

22 And up in the branches of the banyan, very comfortably settled, lived a cat. A very happy cat named Lomaśa, who feasted on the birds of the banyan.

23 There was this outcaste *cāṇḍāla* who had built himself a hut in the forest. Every day, at sunset, he would come,

24 And spread his leather trap. Then, happily he would return to his hut, sleep, and return at dawn to check his luck.

25 Many kinds of animals, in the course of the night, were trapped in the net. One day, it was the turn of the careless cat to fall in the net.

26 Palita saw his mahā-virile enemy, the cat, trapped in the net, and scurried out of his hole and roamed about fearlessly.

27 He was free now to scour the whole forest for food! He noticed a chunk of meat that was tied to the net as bait,

28 So he scampered up along the net, delighted with his delicious find.

29 Even as he nibbled at the meat, he laughed to himself, seeing his enemy, the cat, so helpless. Then, suddenly, he looked up.

30 What did he see but an even more dangerous enemy – a mongoose with copper-bright eyes, a mongoose named Hariṇa who had smelt out the mouse and trailed him there.

31 There he stood, licking his lips, and looking forward to a hearty mouse-meal. And then, in the interlocking branches of the banyan,

32 Perched another enemy – a sharp-beaked owl named Candraka, a night-prowler. This combination of the mongoose and the owl

33 Sent a mahā-fearful shudder in the mouse. He thought : 'Horror upon horror! Death is upon me.

34 A fearsome fate faces me on all sides. What should I do to escape it?' Fear was the only darshan he had wherever he looked.

35 Fear almost petrified him. But he steadied him mind and thought: 'When ruin stares you in the face, you have to work out ways to save yourself.

36 I am in an almost helpless condition now. If I try to jump off and scamper away, I'm meat for the mongoose;

37 If I stay where I am, the owl gets me; if I slip inside the met, the cat gobbles me. I am an intelligent mouse, I must keep calm.

38 Let me see how best I can save myself. Anyone who is intelligent and wise and knows the *nīti*-śāstra art of managing things.

39 Will never allow himself to collapse in a crisis, no matter how terrible.

40 Unless I can get the cat's help, I can see no way out. He's my born enemy, of course, but he is also in as much mahā-danger as I am. I'll be helping him out too.

41 Three bitter enemies after my blood. If I have to take the help of one of them, that is, my enemy, the cat, why not?

42 Let me use my knowledge of *nīti*-śāstras, and convince my enemy the cat that the advice I'm giving is good for him, and in so doing work out my own escape.

43 It goes without saying he is my sworn enemy, but he's in very deep trouble. If only I can make the fool do what is best for him!

44 Because he's in such deep trouble, he may make friends with me. In a crisis, it is advisable to make peace with an enemy –

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45 That is what the *ācāryas* say – specially when it's a matter of survival. A learned paṇḍit enemy is always better than a stupid friend.

46 My life today is in the hands of my enemy the cat. Let me see, I'll speak to him how he can save himself.

47 Who knows, my enemy might prove to be as clever as a paṇḍit in this crisis.' This is how the mouse planned his cat-strategy.

48 Conversant with the ways of artha and skilled in the art of persuasion, the mouse consoled and encouraged the cat with these words:

49 "Dear cat, I am your friend and well-wisher. You are still alive? Good! I want you to remain alive – because that will be good for us both.

50 My dear friend, have no fear. Your life is safe. Happiness is yours. I will save you if you promise you will not kill me.

51 There is one way – though I know it is a very difficult one – by which you will be saved, and I too will benefit.

52 I have given a great deal of thought to this, and after deep reflection I have hit upon a plan that will benefit both of us equally.

53 Dear cat, look! These two wicked scoundrels, the mongoose and the owl, are lurking in wait to pounce on me. So long as they don't attack, I have nothing to fear.

54 Look at the way that wicked owl with its restless eyes is glancing at me and hooting away from its perch on that branch. I am afraid.

55 Take seven steps together with anyone, and he becomes your friend. You are more than a friend, you are a paṇḍit-*sakhā*. You can trust me.

56 My dear cat-friend, without my help you cannot free yourself. Promise not to harm me, and I will nibble you free from this net.

57 After all, you on this tree top and I below – both of us live in the shelter of this tree. You can't deny that.

58 He who does not trust anyone, and he who is not trusted by anyone – both are unhappy creatures. Those who are wise do not praise either.

59 So why not let love grow between us and why not learn the good of togetherness? Learned paṇḍits have no kind words for a wasted opportunity.

60 Now is the perfect time for us to take advantage of being together. I want that you should live, and you want that I should live.

61 When a man floats away to safety across a mahā-river on a plank of wood, he keeps that plank beside him when he reaches the safe shore. He saves the wood that saved him.

62 So too, may the two of us together be mutually happy. I will rescue you, and you will rescue me."

63 Palita spoke these eminently beneficial and reasonable words, and looked expectantly at the cat for a response.

64 After listening carefully to his enemy's very sensible suggestion, the intelligent cat gave an appropriate reply.

65 He was a learned cat. An eloquent cat. He gave the proposal deep thought, reflected on his own plight, and then came out with a fulsome pūjā-praise of the mouse.

66 That sharp-toothed cat with glinting lapis lazuli eyes looked affectionately at the mouse named Lomaśa and said:

67 "Bless you, my dear friend! May you prosper! You wish me to live. Tell me how – tell me quickly how this can be achieved.

68 Terrible is my plight. Your plight is no less. We must get together and save ourselves. There is no time to waste.

69 *Vibho*! O radiant one! Whatever you want me to do, I will certainly do. Your good deed will not go in vain. I will amply recompense you.

70 Gone is my pride! I am your *bhakta*, I am your disciple. I will serve you, I will obey you. I will always seek your grace."

71 Hearing this pledge of the cat, who was now completely under his influence, Palita came out with some brilliant words of great benefit.

72 "What a noble mind you have! Exactly what I expected from a discerning person. Listen to the plan I have for our mutual benefit.

73 I am mahā-afraid of the mongoose. I'll slip inside the net and hide behind you. Please do not harm me. I cannot help you if you harm me.

74 And there is this scoundrelly owl who's after my life. Save me from him. O my loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend, I promise you I will nibble you out to safety."

75 Lomaśa heard these sensible words filled with well-meaning for himself, and he gratefully welcomed the plan of Palita.

76 Pūjā-praising Palita, and overflowing with friendliness, the determined cat reflected seriously before saying happily:

77 "O my *sakhā*-friend! Come! Come quickly! *Bhadraṁ te*! May you prosper! O my own life! O saviour of my life!

78 O my *sakhā*-friend! Order this grateful one to do whatever you wish, and I will do it. We will be friends forever!

79 I will remember you even after I am freed, and I and my friends and relatives will forever serve you and please you and honour you.

80 O gracious one! Once I am out of this fearful plight, I will do all I can to be of faithful service to you and delight you every which way.

81 How can a receiver of good ever equal the giver of good? How can kindness ever be equally compensated? Because, first, a return is only a return; and, secondly, the good was given unsolicited."

82 So the mouse (continued Bhīṣma) convinced the cat what was good for the cat, and snuggled safely in the lap of his enemy.

83 Such was the persuasive untelligence of the mouse that he snuggled in the cat's lap as a baby with a father or a mother.

84 Seeing the mouse secure in the lap of the cat, the mongoose and the owl gave up whatever hopes they had of making a meal of him.

85 Not only were they wonderstruck – they were gripped by great fear. Such love between a cat and a mouse! Awesome!

86 Resourceful they were, and strong, and clever, but they realised it was impossible to break the friendship they saw between the cat and the mouse.

87 For whatever reason, cat and mouse were united. So, reluctantly, the owl and the mongoose decided to return to their dwellings.

88 And then, O king Yudhiṣṭhira, keeping in mind the importance of time and place, Palita, biding his time, began very slowly gnawing at the strings of the net.

89 Impatient and agitated in the trap, the cat looked at the mouse nibbling much too politely at the string.

90 Unable to control his mounting irritation, because the net showed no sign of weakening, the cat exclaimed:

91 "My good friend! Why are you taking so long? Your own safety – is that all you want? O slayer-of-enemies, that dog-eating *cāṇḍāla* will be here any moment! Finish your job!"

92 Shrewd Palita heard the agitated cat and, concerned with his own good, said to the not-very-wise cat:

93 "My good friend! *Saumya*! Do shut up! There's no hurry. No need to worry. I know what to do when, and I will do it then.

94 Worthless is work begun at the wrong time. The same work begun at the right time produces mahā-fruitful results.

95 What about the danger I face if you are free at the wrong time? So, my dear *sakhā*-friend, be patient. What's the hurry?

96 As soon as I spot the *cāṇḍāla* coming towards us, knife in hand, I know the trouble we'll be in. That's when I'll quickly grow the string and set you free.

97 And that's when you'll scamper off to safety up in the tree. You'll think of nothing else then except your own life.

98 And so, Lomaśa, with you safe and far away in the branches of the tree, I'll slip off to safety in my own little hole in the ground."

99 The intelligent and eloquent cat heard the plan to save his life and, worried about his own safety, decided to speak up plainly.

100 Lomasa was getting increasingly impatient, and, eager to obtain his own safety, he said to the procrastinating mouse:

101 "Look how prompt I was in sheltering you! Good people work for their friends happily and speedily, not like you.

102 It's about time you hurried up your promise to get me out of this trap. O mahā-wise one! Do something quickly that will save us both.

103 If, on the other hand, all you can think of is our mutual enmity, then be warned! You scoundrel, don't you know wickedness only shortens one's span of life?

104 If I have unknowingly done you any harm ever, I ask forgiveness for it now. Please forget the past. Be happy with the present."

105 Very wise was this mouse, thoroughly versed in the śāstras. To the cat he made an excellent pronouncement:

106 "My dear cat, I have listened to all that you have said for your own benefit. I suggest you listen now to my side of the case.

107 Friendship born out of fear, friendship continued out of fear – one has to be as wary of both as one is wary of a venom-spitting snake.

108 Friendship with a person more powerful than oneself can be as injurious to one later, as over-rich food to a mild appetite.

109 No one is anyone's friend, and no one is anyone's enemy. Self-interest is what brings people together. Self-interest joins self-interest, like tame elephants trained to catch wild elephants.

110 When self-interest is accomplished, no one remembers the benefactor –

111 No one thinks of his welfare. Which is why one should always leave something undone, uncompleted. I will set you free, and, fearing the hunter,

112 You will clamber up the tree, you won't even think of catching me. I have gnawed away many strings, only one more is left;

113 And soon enough, Lomaśa, I will tear that one off also. Be calm. Everything will work out all right.

114 Relax. I am working on this last bit of string." So the two went on discussing the plan of survival.

115 The night passed, but great fear gripped the mind of Lomaśa. Then, early at dawn, a weird-looking figure, reddish-black-skinned,

116 Huge-hipped, walking askew, grim and grisly, surrounded by a pack of dogs, with a mahā-gaping mouth and pointed ears, filthy, a horror of a darshan,

117 Carrying a weapon, came to the spot. It was the *cāṇḍāla* outcaste Parigha. Stunned, the cat saw that messenger of Yama coming

118 And, shivering with fright, he mumbled, "What do I do? What do I do?" Here, the two of them, terror-stricken; there, the grotesque new arrival.

119 The mongoose and the owl were momentarily stupefied. They were both strong and clever, no doubt of that;

120 But they had no clear plan of what to do, and so could not attack the mouse and the cat. Seeing the mouse and the cat so well banded,

121 The owl and the mongoose decided to call it a day, and they went away. The mouse bit through the last piece of string and the cat,

122 Free at last, bounded up the banyan's branches to safety. Also free, and spared the proximity of his bitter enemy,

123 Palita the mouse dashed inside his hole. Lomaśa the cat sat atop a branch. The *cāṇḍāla* inspected the net carefully.

124 And, disappointed there was nothing in it, he quickly left the spot, O bull-brave Bharata, and returned to his hut.

125 Heaving huge sighs of relief at having survived such dire peril, Lomaśa from his perch in the branches said to Palita in the hole below:

126 "Not one word! – and you rushed into your hole! I am grateful to you. You have really saved me. Don't tell me you suspect me!

127 In grave danger you trusted me, you saved my life. Time now to savour the fruits of friendship. Why are you hiding yourself from me?

128 How does it help a man to make many friends and not keep alive the friendship? That fool will have no one at his side to help him when he is in trouble.

129 My friend! My loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend! You did me more than a good turn. Is it not time now for us to enjoy a beautiful friendship?

130 All my friends, all my relatives will now give you the pūjā-respect that a deserving guru gets from his disciples.

131 Not just they – I will be the first among them to pūjā-respect you. Who is there so mean who will refuse to pūjā-respect his saviour?

132 Be the lord of my body, be the lord of my home! Whatever I have, is at your disposal, to give and distribute as you please.

133 O wise one! Be my adviser, favour me like a father favours a son. I pledge you my solemn word you have nothing to fear from me.

134 In wisdom you are the equal of Uśanas-Śukra himself. By the power of your will you have infused new life in us."

135 The sweet and peaceful words of the cat prompted the mouse, who was well versed in the art of self-interest, to say:

136 "Lomaśa, I have listened very carefully to every single word you have spoken. Let me tell you what's in my mind. Please listen to me carefully.

137 One has to know one's friends well. One has to study one's enemies thoroughly. The wise say that it is very difficult to do either.

138 Enemies become friends, and friends turn into enemies. Very difficult to know if a friend or an enemy is motivated by kāma-love or *krodha*-anger when he strikes up a relationship.

139 There never really is any enemy, there never really is any friend. It's circumstances and self-interest that make friends or enemies.

140 A friend remains a friend only so long as he serves your self-interest, and stops being so if his death harms your self-interest.

141 Friendship is not lasting, enmity is not permanent. Friends and enemies change, according to one's needs and interests.

142 Self-interest is the supremely powerful factor that will transform an enemy into a friend, and a friend into an enemy.

143 A person who forgets self-interest and trusts a friend or distrusts an enemy, or a person who is sweetly loving to all,

144 Whether friend or enemy – such a person is slightly mentally unbalanced. Never trust the untrustworthy, never fully trust the trustworthy.

145 The trouble with trust is that it affects the very roots of human dignity. Self-interest motivates mothers, fathers, sons,

146 And maternal uncles, sister's sons, and all other relatives. Father and mother abandon a dear son who is morally degraded.

147 People know how to take care of themselves. The essence of everything is self-interest. O wise one! How cunning of you, once you are free,

148 To say that you seek my happiness, despite being my enemy. You were safe up in the banyan, but you did not see the net,

149 And you were careless, and you came down, and you got trapped. How can a careless person who can't look after himself

150 Help another? He will surely create a mess everywhere else too. Besides, all your sweet talk today, 'How utterly lovable you are, how much I love you' –

151 There's a good reason for that, my friend. Let me tell you everything straight. There's always a reason for loving and hating.

152 It's for self-benefit, that's all. No one really loves anyone. Brothers loving each other? Self-benefit. Husband-and-wife? Self-benefit.

153 If you ask me, there's no such thing as selfless love in this world. There's reason behind brothers falling out, or a wife losing her temper.

154 They are close to each other, so they make up. But people not close, don't make up. Someone gives a large donation, so he becomes dear; someone speaks sweetly, so he becomes dear.

155 Someone performs *homas*, chants mantras, and intones *japa* – and he becomes dear. You remain dear so long as you serve someone's self-interest.

156 After the self-interest is served, you stop being dear. Pray tell me, what self-interest do you have now that makes me dear to you

157 Except the fact that you would love to gobble me up? I know only too well the reason I am so dear to you now. Time changes circumstances; and new circumstances create new self-interests.

158 The wise know this, and we should follow the example of the wise. I know what's good for me, I'm a self-interest paṇḍit. You cannot trick me.

159 So much love for me – all at the wrong time! Because I know my self-interest, I know who to be friends with, and who to find fault with.

160 Likes and dislikes are as fickle as ever-changing clouds. Enemy today, friend today, and again today you – the same you –

161 Are my enemy. Look at the fickleness of fortune! We became friends when there was a need for us to become friends;

162 And then times change, and Kāla bids farewell to the friendship. You are my born enemy, but for a special reason you became my friend.

163 That reason now is ended, and you are once again my born enemy. It's natural. Skilled as I am in the sāstra-art of managing things,

164 I slipped inside the net. Why do you think I did that? Your valour saved me; my valour saved you.

165 We have been good to each other. There's no point now in cultivating more togetherness. My good friend, your work is done, and my work is done.

166 What am I good for you now except as a hearty meal? I'm the dinner, you the diner. I'm the puny mouse, you the fat cat;

167 There's nothing common between us. How can we be friends? I can see through you. You are a wise one. You have escaped from the net,

168 You must be famished, you are on the lookout for a quick easy meal. You were asking for a meal, weren't you, when you fell in the net,

169 And now with the śāstra-art of management you want to make a meal of me. I know you are hungry and it's meal time for you,

170 And so it's convenient for you to make friends with me and then a meal of me. And so you recommend your wife and sons and relatives as my admirers and devotees,

171 But I am sorry, my loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend, I am not impressed. Seeing me with you, your beloved wife and your sons –

172 Tell me, what will prevent them from cheerfully devouring me? No, I can't be with you. Our togetherness-time is over.

173 If you really wish me well, remember the good I did and keep your distance. An enemy, ruthless, desperate, famished –

174 How can a wise man ever go near such a person? *Svasti te-astu*! Fare you well!

175 I have to do what I have to do. Out of fear, maybe; or faith in myself, if you like. Never safe for a weakling to be near a bully.

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176 Never near you again, Lomaśa! Go away. All I ask is : If you think I have done you good, remember me as the doer of good to you.

177 It's safest to fear a powerful and wicked person, even when he professes peace. Tell me what you would like me to do for you – but see that it has nothing to do with your self-interest.

178 I'll give you anything, but you can't have me. To protect oneself, everything can be sacrificed: children, kingdom, jewels, wealth.

179 Give up everything, but don't give up yourself. From the clutches of one's enemies, power, wealth, jewels –

180 Everything can be retrieved, so long as one is alive to do so. This I have heard. It is utterly stupid to surrender one's life like surrendering wealth.

181 Why just wealth? – Even one's wife can be sacrificed to save one's life. A man who thinks before he acts and knows how to protect himself

182 Will never find himself at a loss at any time. Even a weak man who knows what needs to be known about his powerful enemy –

183 He is the intelligent one who has grasped the essence of the sāstra-art of management." Such was the forthright rebuke administered by Palita to the cat.

184 Ashamed, the cat replied to the mouse:

185 "I swear to you, to hate a friend is a most horrible crime. I know you are wise. In fact, it's clear proof of your wisdom that you are so ready to help me.

186 O noble one! You have taught me the essence of what constitutes self-interest. I agree with you absolutely. But please don't misunderstand me. I am not against you.

187 You saved my life. You earned my friendship. I know dharma, I know what guṇa-merits are, I am deeply, deeply grateful to you,

188 I am filled with the milk of human-friendship, I am your devoted *bhakta*. O my noble friend! Be friends with me again. Let us go hand in hand everywhere.

189 Order me, and I will lay down my life, and the lives of my family, at your feet. All who are learned have placed their trust in people like me.

190 O you who know the truths of dharma! You surely cannot distrust me." All the high-flown praise of the cat failed to move the mouse.

191 Who remained as adamant as ever, and said to the cat: "You are good, too good. I have heard so, at least; but I can't trust you.

192 Praise me to your heart's content, drown me in wealth – I can't trust you. O my loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend, the wise never embrace their enemy without very good reason.

193 Uśanas-Śakra has two *gāthā*-verses; listen carefully to them. 'After joining hands with a strong enemy in a common plight,

194 The weaker of the two should be extra-careful; and, danger over, should not trust him. Don't trust the untrustworthy, don't over-trust the trustworthy.

195 Let others trust you; be wary of trusting others.' The idea is that one must seek one's best welfare at all times.

196 After all, only the living enjoy the delights of progeny and wealth. Succinctly, *nīti*-śāstra says the ideal thing is to trust nobody –

197 One's best welfare lies in not trusting people. A person who refuses to trust, even if he is in a weak position, is spared humiliation by his enemies;

198 But an over-trusting person, no matter how powerful, will get humiliated by a weak enemy. Dear cat, I have to guard myself against you –

199 And you also, do take care and protect yourself against your enemy the *cāṇḍāla.*" The mere mention of "*cāṇḍāla*" alarmed the cat,

200 And he leapt off the banyan branch and scurried to safety elsewhere. And the intelligent knower of the śāstra-of-management,

201 The wise mouse Palita, also found himself another safer hole. Himself weak, but with wise policy even the mahā-powerful

202 Many enemies were baffled singlehanded by Palita the mouse – the moral being that in times of crisis a man who is as intelligent as a paṇḍit should befriend his enemy.

203 Look, how the mouse and the cat together saved each other. This is the path of Kṣatriya-dharma that I show to you.

204 Listen to me, mahārāja, as I briefly sum up things. Though born enemies, the cat and the mouse developed a fine friendship,

205 Realising the supreme advantage that would be theirs by being together. A wise man should use his wisdom and benefit from such alliances.

206 Even a learned man, if careless in these matters, can be humbled by another clever person. Though afraid, show no fear; though distrusting, show trust;

207 But never be uncautious, careless and negligent. That spells disaster. Peace with an enemy, war with a friend – it all depends on the situation.

208 O lord of men! Those who know all about peace-making are the ones who give this advice. Keeping the practical wisdom of the śāstras in mind, mahārāja, and the advice of peace-makers,

209 One should act like a person who's afraid before the cause of fear appears. Before a powerful enemy, give the impression of being afraid.

210 A careful person who is prepared in advance will find many ways of solving a crisis. O rājā, a person ready for the fear before fear appears

211 Faces no fear; but he who depends on others to overcome his fears, will find himself at the receiving end of insurmountable fears.

212 Never advise a person who thinks no end of his intelligence; he will not listen. Only he who is aware of his inadequacy seeks expert guidance. A wise man, afraid, shows no fear;

213 A distrusting wise man shows trust. Even in the worst crisis, however, shun outright lying. So, I have given you, Yudhiṣṭhira, this cat-and-mouse *itihāsa*,

214 This historical fable. Learn from it how to deal with your friends and others. With the help of intelligence, the difference between friend and foe,

215 How and when to make war and peace – one learns what is right to do. When there is a common threat, alliance with a powerful foe

216 Is in order; threat over, there is no need to trust that foe. O earth-ruler, such a policy is in harmony with three-fold dharma-artha-kāma.

217 Steady yourself in the wisdom of this śruti-teaching, protect your subjects with it, and walk tall! Journey with Brahmins, O Pāṇḍava.

218 O descendant of Bharata! You will find Brahmins very helpful in this world and in the next world. *Prabhu*! Lord! They know dharma, and they are always grateful.

219 O lord of men! Give them pūjā-respect, and they will prove to be auspicious for you. Give them pūjā-respect. O rājā! Kingdom, affluence, supreme achievement, glory,

220 The continuance of your family will be yours if you do so.

221 O Bharata king! Study this delightful fable on friendship and enmity, and put it in practical use in the maṇḍala-gatherings of your foes.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED THIRTY-NINE

1 "O mahā-muscled one!" asked Yudhiṣṭhira. "The advice you give is never to trust one's enemies. But how can a rājā rule a kingdom if he is advised not to trust anyone?

2 O rājā, great is the peril, according to you, for a trusting rājā. But how is it possible for a rājā to overcome earth-lords if he is never sure?

3 You have bewildered me, Pitāmaha, with all this advice of distrust. Please be so gracious as to make everything very clear."

4 Bhīṣma replied: O rājā! You must listen to the dialogue between the earth-lord Brahmadatta and the bird named Pūjanī in his palace.

5 Brahmadatta ruled in Kāmpilya. A longtime dweller in the palace's inner apartments was this bird named Pūjanī.

6 Like the *jīvajīvaka* bird, Pūjanī could understand the calls of all creatures. Though of bird-yoni birth, she was all-knowing, no truth was beyond her grasp.

7 She gave birth to a splendidly handsome son; the same day a son was born to the rājā and his queen.

8 A grateful Pūjanī used to fly to the shore of the ocean every day and bring two fruits for her son and the baby prince.

9 One fruit was for the nourishment of her son, and the other for the nourishment of the prince.

10 Like *amṛta*-nectar was that fruit, building physical strength and spiritual energy. It became a regular routine with her, to bring daily the two fruits.

11 And the baby prince flourished excellently on Pūjanī's fruit. One day, as the baby prince was in the arms of his nurse,

12 He noticed Pūjanī's son. Slipping away from the nurse's arms, he ran as little children do to play with him.

13 Then, taking to a secluded spot the bird-son born at the same time as he, he squeezed the life out of the boy, O Indra-among-rājās, and returned to his nurse's arms.

14 In the meantime, O rājā, Pūjanī returned with the fruits, and saw her baby son lying dead on the ground.

15 The sight of her dead son sent tears coursing down her cheeks. Stricken with grief, Pūjanī lamented:

16 "Kṣatriyas cannot mix with others! They don't care for others. They have no friends. They harm you for their own ends, and then leave you.

17 Never trust a Kṣatriya! He is out to harm you. First he will injure you, and then console you with insincere sweetness.

18 See how ungrateful and cruel and perfidious he has been with me! I will teach him a lesson – I will take revenge.

19 He's three times guilty – he has killed one born and brought up with him, one who ate with him, one who depended on him for shelter."

20 Saying this, Pūjanī pierced the prince's eyes with her talons. That comforted her somewhat, and she said:

21 "The price of a selfish evil act has to be paid immediately by the evil-doer. But the revenge-taker's deed does not detract from his store of good and bad karma.

22 And if, O king, evil karma does not bring instant punishment, rest assured the evil-doer's sons, grandsons and other descendants will suffer."

23 Brahmadatta realised that Pūjanī had pierced his son's eyes to avenge her son's murder, so he said to her:

24 "We harmed you, and you took revenge. That makes us even. Stay here, Pūjanī. Don't go away."

25 Pūjanī replied: "The wise do not recommend that a harm-doer stay with a person he has harmed. Best for him to leave and go.

26 One should never believe the sweet assurances of a person one has harmed. The bitterness remains, and the trusting fool invites his own ruin.

27 Such bitterness is passed on to sons and to grandsons, and when the grandchildren die, they carry the bitterness to the next world.

28 If you have such bitter feelings against anyone, trusting him is out of the question. That's the easiest way out. Once betrayed, never trusting.

29 Never trust a person who does not trust you. Never over-trust a person who trusts you. Over-trusting destroys the very roots of the dignity of the one who over-trusts. Or, if that pleases you, let others trust you; but see that you do not trust them.

30 Father and mother are cannot-be-escaped blood-relatives, a wife is an old-age burden, a son is merely the product of one's semen, a brother is an enemy, a well-greased palm is a friend. No one but you yourself is trustable.

31 There can be no reconciliation between two people who have bitterly hurt each other. There is no reason left for me now to live here.

32 Gifts and honour and pūjā-respect can no more impress the person who mistrusts you. When the strong try to impress the weak, it is all the more alarming.

33 Where once you were praised, and now you are vilified – any self-respecting person must keep a safe distance from that place.

34 Long did I stay with you, basking in the respect and honour I received. Now, there is bitterness between us. It is right that I gladly leave."

35 Brahmadatta replied: "To return an injury with an injury surely cannot be considered a crime. It's like I owed you a debt, and the debt is now paid. Don't go away, Pūjanī."

36 Pūjanī replied: "No friendship is possible between the harm-doer and the harmed one. The hearts of both get embittered beyond repair."

37 Brahmadatta said: "Friendship is possible between harm-doer and the harmed one. Bitterness can cease. Evil can be ended, peace restored."

38 Pūjanī said: "Bitterness never ceases. Never trust a second time, saying, 'My enemy is sweet to me.' Best to stay away – because there can be danger in this to one's very life. Such trust is foolish.

39 The trouble is that when sharp weapons fail to impress strong men, sweet words do. It's like getting tame she-elephants to capture wild elephants."

40 Brahmadatta said: "Affection grows naturally between two people living together, even between excecutioner and victim, between dog and dog-eating *cāṇḍāla.*

41 No matter how much the bitterness, togetherness sweetens the animosity – and the bitterness slowly slips off like a drop of water on a lotus leaf."

42 Pūjanī said: "Learned paṇḍits say bitter hostility springs from five causes: women, property, harsh words, rivalry, and injury.

43 A Kṣatriya should refrain from killing a large-hearted adversary, whatever the hostility, until all the pros and cons of the crime are studied.

44 Never trust an embittered friend, because hatred is sure to lurk in his heart like fire hidden in fuel-wood.

45 O rājā! The fire of bitter anger is like the ocean's unextinguishable subterranean fire; it cannot be removed by wealth, prowess, conciliation, or even śruti-wisdom.

46 O king! The fire of bitterness dies out when the bitter person dies. It is extinguished after it has fatally consumed one of the two parties.

47 A person you have harmed can never again be your trusted friend, no matter how much you placate him with gifts and respect. That you harmed him once will always be for you a source of fear.

48 Till now I never did you any harm. Nor did you harm me. And so I stayed with you. Not any more – because I cannot now trust you."

49 Brahmadatta said: "It's all the work of Cosmic Time Kāla. Kāla does everything. Kāla is the criminal, who else?

50 Creatures are born, and creatures die. It's all in the hands of Kāla: birth and death. No wonder no one lives for ever.

51 Some die in groups, some die one by one. Some take a long time dying. Like fire consuming wood, Kāla consumes creatures.

52 Gracious lady! You see, I have not caused you grief, nor have you given me pain. Kāla is the cause of everyone's grief, Kāla is the cause of everyone's happiness.

53 Live here without fear. I will do you no harm. I forgive whatever you have done to me. All I ask, Pūjanī, is forgiveness from you."

54 Pūjanī replied: "If Kāla is responsible for all that happens, why is there so much bitterness? Why do friends and relatives seek revenge for deaths?

55 If Kāla is responsible for joy and sorrow, loss and gain, why did the gods and anti-gods butcher each other in the distant past?

56 Why do doctors try so hard to cure the sick? If Kāla is cooking us creatures, why do we have to cook up remedies for the inevitable?

57 If Kāla is responsible, why all the mahā-wailing and moaning of the suffering world? Why all this clamour for dharma and good karma?

58 O lord of men! You son killed my son. I blinded your son in revenge. I deserve to be executed by you.

59 Maddened by grief for my dead son, I did a criminal deed. You have every right to punish me. Listen to me. The truth is this.

60 What do human beings want birds for? To eat or to play with, that's all. There's no third reason, as far as I can see.

61 Killing or caging, that's it. So we birds seek escape from getting killed or caged. Those who are wise in the Vedas say there's no grief so painful as being born and then dying.

62 All are in love with life, all are in love with their sons. All shun grief, all desire happiness.

63 There are many kinds of grief, Brahmadatta. Old age is grief, to be poor is grief, living with a person you don't like is grief, and separation from people you like is grief.

64 Injury and imprisonment cause grief. Even a woman can cause grief. So can a lost son, or a dissolute son.

65 Some fools say other people's grief does not affect them; it is not their grief. But great men know this is not true. Grief affects all.

66 How can anyone who has experienced grief say such a thing? The feeling man feels the griefs of others as poignantly as his own.

67 O foe-subduing rājā! What I have done to you, and what you have done to me, will be remembered for hundreds of years.

68 There can be no reconciliation after what we have done to each other. You will recall what happened to your son, and your grief will revive.

69 Impossible for a person to be reconciled with a person after he has taken revenge for the harm that person did to him – as impossible as for the shattered parts of a clay pot to unite.

70 The śāstra of self-interest emphatically says that trust produces unhappiness. Uśanas-Śukra gave Prahlāda two gāthā-verses on this.

71 'Like a honey-gatherer falling in a dry-grass-covered pit, perishes the man who trusts the promises, true or false, of an enemy.

72 Family feuds survive the deaths of enemies. They are always passed on, even if there is only a single descendant left to talk of them.'

73 O lord of men! Wicked people hide their hostility under a cloak of sweetness; when the time is ripe, they smash their adversary, like a clay water jar dashed against a rock.

74 Never, O rājā, can trust be reposed in a person after he has been wronged. That is the surest way of breeding misery for oneself."

75 Brahmadatta said: "How can one ever find success without trusting others? If you are always afraid, you are no better than dead."

76 Pūjanī said: "If both your feet are blistered, and you insist on running, all that will happen is that your blisters will get worse.

77 If your eyes are paining, and you insist on exposing them to a chilly wind, all that will happen is that the pain will get worse.

78 If you know the path you have taken is wrong, and foolishly keep walking on it, you will surely end up by losing your life.

79 The farmer who does not take into account the rainy season when sowing, will never reap a harvest in his field.

80 It does not matter what kind of food you eat – bitter and spicy, or sweet and flavourful – so long as it is nourishing, it is like amṛta-nectar.

81 But if he a man spurns wholesome food, and gorges himself on harmful dishes, all he does is shorten his own life.

82 Human effort and fate work hand-in-hand; they are always there. The noble-minded believe in good deeds, the feeble-minded in fate.

83 Harsh or gentle, work that benefits oneself must be done. He who does not do this, instead of prospering, will end up in futility.

84 Think of nothing else but bold and positive action. Concentrate everything on what will be of benefit to you.

85 Learning, brave enterprise, skill, strength, and patience – these five, according to wise men, are the five friends a man has. With their help, everything happens.

86 House, precious metals, land, wife, friends – they are available in plenty. One can get them anywhere.

87 A wise man is happy everywhere. Everywhere he goes, he shines. He does not make others fear him, and he does not fear others.

88 Even the little wealth of an intelligent man keeps increasing. All his activity is marked by skill, resourcefulness and self-discipline.

89 Men of small intelligence, sentimentally attached to their homes, find wives nagging their lives out of them, like the young of a crab devouring their mother.

90 Obsessed by thoughts of 'my house, my field, my friends, my country' and so on, misguided men create their own special miseries.

91 If the land of your birth is plagued by disease and famine, leave it and go elsewhere. Stay back only if you are properly honoured.

92 O earth-lord! I have done grievous wrong to your son. I do not deserve to live here any more. I will go away to another place.

93 One should keep as far away as possible from a bad wife, a bad son, a bad rājā, a bad friend, bad relatives, and a bad homeland.

94 How can one trust a bad son? How can one enjoy a bad wife? What happiness is there in a bad kingdom which cannot even assure a subject of a decent livelihood?

95 How can one associate with an undependable bad friend? And if one is not well off, all one gets from a relative is contempt.

96 Only that wife is a wife who speaks sweetly. Only that son is a son who meets expectations. A friend inspires trust, a country ensures livelihood.

97 Only that rājā is a good ruler who does not resort to brute force to establish law and order, who helps the poor with no ulterior motive.

98 If an earth-lord sees life with the eyes of dharma, wife and country and friend and son and relatives – all start possessing virtuous guṇa-qualities.

99 If all he knows is adharma, his subjects are sure to face disaster. Because a rājā is the root of three-fold dharma-artha-kāma, he has to carefully cherish the welfare of his people.

100 He is not an earth-lord but a thief who does not use the one-sixth tax imposed on his people for the welfare of the people.

101 Burdened with all the crimes of his subjects goes the rājā to hell who does not work for the prosperity of his people.

102 The rājā who lives up to his promise of protecting his subjects with the help of dharma is honoured as the universal dispenser of happiness.

103 According to Manu Prajāpati, a rājā is a seven-guṇa personality: he is mother, father, guru, protector, Vahni-Agni, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, and Yama.

104 Known as a father is the rājā who is always compassionate towards his subjects. Anyone who deceives or cheats him is re-born as a bird or a beast.

105 Because he looks after the needs of the poor and heals the suffering and the sick, a rājā is respected as a mother. Because he scorches the wicked, he is fire. Because he restrains and punishes the criminal, he is Yama.

106 Because he grants desires and gives away wealth liberally, he is Kubera. Because he advises on dharma, he is the guru; and because he assures the people's safety, he is the protector.

107 Never unstable is the kingdom of a rājā who uses his guṇa-virtues for the welfare of the city and the village, because he is the champion and protector of dharma.

108 The rājā who knows how to honour his people in towns and villages finds happiness in this life and in the next.

109 Defeated by his foes is the rājā whose subjects are burdened with taxes, deprivation, and other problems.

110 The rājā whose subjects blossom like mahā-lotuses gets all the fruits of success here and renown in the realm of heaven.

111 Hostility against a powerful adversary, O rājā, is never recommended. No kingdom for him, no happiness for him who incurs the enmity of a rājā more powerful than him."

112 O lord of men! (continued Bhīṣma) Saying this to rājā Brahmadatta, the bird flew away to the place she preferred.

113 I have presented to you the dialogue between Brahmadatta and Pūjanī. O most excellent king! What else would you like to know?

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY

1 "O descendant of Bharata!" Yudhiṣṭhira said. "Pitāmaha! The yuga is ending, and dharma is declining. Barbarians are on a rampage. What should one do?"

2 Bhīṣma replied: Listen to me, Bharata, how an earth-lord should behave in such a calamitous time. He will have to stop being gentle and compassionate.

3 Let me place before you, in this connection, the ancient *itihāsa*-story of the dialogue between Bhāradvāja-Kaṇika and rājā Śatruñjaya.

4 Śatruñjaya was the mahā-chariot-hero rājā of Sauvīra. He approached Bharadvaja-Kaṇika to learn about artha.

5 "How does one go about acquiring the unacquired? When acquired, how does one increase it? When increased, how to protect it? And when protected, how to make the best use of it?"

6 Questioned about artha by someone conversant with artha, the Brahmin Kaṇika replied with these excellent words:

7 "A king must always be ready to punish. He must display prowess. Masking his weakness, he must take advantage of his enemy's weakness.

8 People fear a ruler who is always ready to punish, which is why punishment is an excellent way of controlling them.

9 Paṇḍits with deep insight into the facts of life praise punishment, and say that of the four requirements of ruling – conciliation, gift-giving, fomenting disunity, and punishment – punishment is the most important.

10 When the root cause of safety is gone, life is imperilled. Roots destroyed, the branches wither.

11 So a man who is as wise as a paṇḍit sees that he destroys the roots of his enemy, and then wins over the enemy's allies and supporters.

12 In a crisis, a king should seek wise counsel, display his strength, fight bravely and, if so required, retreat with dignity.

13 Soft in his speech, sharp as a razor in his heart, a king must shed kāma and anger, and always appear to be polite and gentle.

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14 By all means let him make alliance with a rival, but never should he trust that rival. When what he desired is achieved, he shrewdly puts an end to that alliance.

15 With assuring words he should turn an enemy into a friend, but always fear him as he would the presence of a snake in his house.

16 Win over the weak-willed by referring to past kindnesses, the wicked-willed by referring to future benefits, the paṇḍit by referring to the present.

17 The success-seeker should be ready with *añjali*-supplication, vows of loyalty, praṇāma-ing and head-bowing, even copious shedding of tears.

18 Carry your enemy on your shoulders and wait for the chance; when the time is ripe, drop him and smash him like a clay pot on a rock.

19 O Indra-among-rājās! Briefly, a king should be all aflame, like ebony wood, in front of an enemy; but in the long run, let him be flame-less, like slow-burning, smouldering, smoke-less dry sticks.

20 Never take the help of the inefficient and the ungrateful. But if you must make use of them, reject them after what you sought from them has been accomplished. Always leave a little unaccomplished; workers become deserters when work is over and done with.

21 Cultivate kokilā-sweetness, boar-aggressiveness, Mount Meru firmness, empty house accessibility, actor's dissimulation, friend's bhakti – the best from each of them.

22 By all means go to the house of your enemy as often as possible, specially if he is in trouble, and enquire about his welfare, showing concern.

23 The lazy, the timid, the conceited-with-*abhimān*, the fearful of criticism, and the procrastinating are always unsuccessful.

24 Never expose your weakness to an enemy; always make a note of your enemy's weakness. Be like the tortoise – pull in your limbs.

25 Watchful and concentrating like a crane, valiant like a lion, swift-pouncing like a wolf, straight-hitting like an arrow – such should a king be.

26 Drinking, gambling, women, hunting, singing and dancing – he should enjoy all these in moderation. To be addicted to any of them is wrong.

27 He should handle his bow as gracefully as a grassblade, he should be ever alert as a deer. When so needed, he should be blind; or, when so needed, deaf.

28 An intelligent king attacks only at the right time and the right place. Futile is the attack that ignores the importance of time and place.

29 Right time or wrong time? How strong am I, how weak? He should carefully consider his own position and his enemy's before plunging into action.

30 The rājā, who abstains from crushing an enemy who is helpless under the power of his rod of punishment, invites his own death, like a pregnant mule.

31 A flowering tree with no fruit. A fruited tree but hard to climb. Ripe-looking fruit that's really unripe. That's how a king should appear to be.

32 Playing for time, a king must always delay satisfying the demands of an enemy. He can always concoct good reasons for putting off an enemy.

33 Until the danger actually materialises, he should fear it warily and prepare for it. When it is in front of him, he should shed all fear and attack bravely.

34 No risk, no reward. No danger, no blessing. In fact, out of calamity comes conquest, provided, of course, that one survives the crisis.

35 Prepare for coming crises, face boldly existing difficulties, fearlessly. Remember there are many hidden dangers that can suddenly erupt.

36 To ignore the happiness that is in your hand, and to keep dreaming of a happiness in some faraway future – is not the way an intelligent man lives his life.

37 A man who sleeps a peaceful trusting sleep after making an alliance with his enemy, is like a man who dozes off on a branch of a tree – he is doomed to fall to a rude awakening.

38 By gentle means or cruel, lift yourself out of any pitiable condition. Once out, you can practise dharma as much as you like.

39 Pamper the enemy of your enemy. Know who your spies are, and know also the spies employed by your enemy to keep an eye on you.

40 See that your spies in your own kingdom and in your enemy's kingdom are well disguised. Plant downright disbelievers and tapasyā-practisers as spies in the kingdom of your enemy,

41 In public parks, amusement spots, water-supplying places, liquor dens, brothels, *tīrthas* and sabhās,

42 For these are the places frequented by dharma-violators, evil-doers and other thorns in the body of society. They should be identified, when in your kingdom, arrested and eliminated.

43 Never trust the untrustworthy, never fully trust the trustworthy. There is great danger in excessive trust. Test before you trust.

44 Once you have managed to get your enemy to trust you implicitly with convincing arguments, catch him unawares at a weak moment and crush him.

45 Suspect the suspicious, of course, but suspect also the one beyond suspicion. It's the one you don't suspect who could destroy your very roots.

46 Lull your enemy with mind-power, silence, the ochre robe, matted hair, deerskin – win his full trust, then pounce on him like a wolf and kill him.

47 Son, brothers, father, friend – whoever stands in the way of his self-interest must be killed by a king seeking prosperity.

48 And the rod of punishment must be made to fall heavily even on an erring guru who is confused on what to do and what not to do.

49 Welcome your enemy, honour him, give him gifts. Then, like a sharp-beaked bird pecking at fruits and flowers, strip him of his affluence.

50 There is no way a king can enjoy mahā-śrī-prosperity without doing cruel deeds, like a fisherman netting fish and killing them.

51 No one is born an enemy, and no one is born a friend. People acquire friends or enemies in proportion to their ability to make friends or enemies.

52 No matter how pitifully he laments, an enemy must not be spared. Wipe out the person who has harmed you, without any regret whatsoever.

53 If a king wants to prosper, he should learn to be liberal with favours to as many people as possible, and refuse also when necessary.

54 Even before attacking, pleasant words; also, after attacking. And he should grieve publicly after cutting off his enemy's head with a sword.

55 Invite your enemy, honour him, propitiate him. This is the way of the world to ensure one's own safety, security and prosperity.

[XII:140:56-65]

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56 Don't quarrel over trifles, don't with two arms try swimming across an ocean. It's as pointless as munching a cow-horn – no rasa, it's tasteless, you'll break your teeth.

57 The Triple Ideal – Dharma, Artha, Kāma – has three disadvantages also. Dharma blocks Artha, Artha blocks Dharma, Kāma blocks both Dharma and Artha. Pursue the glory, be wary of the pitfalls.

58 Unpaid debt, unextinguished fire, unkilled enemy – whatever little remains of these three flares up into uncontrollable proportions later.

59 Horrendous the danger of spiralling debt and an embittered enemy – as dangerous as the consequences of a neglected disease.

60 Never be a shirker worker. Be extra careful – never leave anything unfinished. Even the littlest half-pulled-out thorn will fester in the flesh.

61 Obliterate your enemy – massacre his people, tear up his roads, burn down his houses – see that the whole kingdom is destroyed.

62 A far-seeing vulture, a single-minded concentrating crane, a valiant lion, a self-confident dog, a suspicious crow, a slippery snake – that's what a fearless king should be.

63 Fold your palms in *añjali* to one who is braver than you, strike fear in the heart of a coward, reduce the greedy with luxurious gifts, and wage war with an equal.

64 Create disagreements and misunderstandings among powerful groups, placate and conciliate those who favour you with their loyalty, and always guard your ministers and courtiers from disunion and disaffection.

65 A gentle king is mocked, a harsh king is hated. So a king should learn to be harsh when harshness is called for, and gentle when gentleness is required.

66 With gentleness you can destroy a gentle person, with gentleness you can destroy a fierce person. There is nothing that gentleness cannot accomplish. In fact, there is nothing more effective than gentleness.

67 The king who is gentle when gentleness is required, and harsh when fierceness is required, achieves what he wants, and succeeds in overcoming his enemies.

68 It does not help saying, 'I'll keep a safe distance from him', if you incur the enmity of a clever paṇḍit. The reach of such a person is long, and he can cause you great harm.

69 Don't jump into a river you cannot swim across. Don't try to uproot an un-uprootable tree. Don't take anything that can be taken back from you. Don't attack an enemy whose head you cannot cut off.

70 All this that I have told you is the deceitful and disgraceful path. No human being should normally walk on this path. But it is imperative to know the mind of one's enemy, which is why I am saying all this for your welfare."

71 The ruler of the kingdom of Suvīra listened to the practical advice of the Brahmin, and cheerfully implemented it, with the result that he and his relatives enjoyed abundant prosperity.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-ONE

1 Yudhiṣṭhira asked:
"When as a result of world-wide violations, supreme Dharma declines, and adharma becomes dharma, and dharma becomes adharma;

2 O lord of the world, when traditionat norms and values are flouted, and dharma turned upside-down, when kings along with thieves start oppressing the world;

3 When, O Bharata, kāma-lust and greed and folly spread fear everywhere, when the far-āśrama stages of life are misinterpreted, along with rituals;

4 And, O earth-ruler, when no one trusts anyone, and everywhere one looks one sees fear, when everyone is exploiting and cheating everyone else;

5 When the whole country is going up in flames, when Brahmins are harassed and hounded, when Parjanya-rain-clouds hold back rain, when mutual backbiting creates dissensions;

6 When barbarians take over the means of livelihood all over the earth – how is a Brahmin to survive in such terrible times?

7 Lord-of-men Pitāmaha! How is a kind-hearted person to survive in such a calamity without renouncing sons and grandsons and retiring from life?

8 O crusher of foes! How should a rājā behave in such a vicious world without sacrificing dharma and artha?"

9 Bhīṣma replied: O mahā-muscled one! The root cause of a people's enterprise and prosperity, of timely rains, diseases, death and dangers is the rājā.

10 O bull-brave Bharata! The root is the rājā – I have no doubt at all that the Kṛta, Treta, Dvāpara and Kali yugas depend on the rājā.

11 When such terrible times as you have described corrupt entire populations, reason and sound commonsense and discrimination should become the basis of survival.

12 There is an ancient *itihāsa*-story concerning this, about a conversation between Viśvāmitra and a Cāṇḍāla that took place in a Cāṇḍāla hut.

13 As *daiva*-fate decreed, in the confluence time-span between the Tretā and Dvāpara yugas, there took place a terrible twelve-year drought.

14 The Tretā yuga had ended, and the Dvāpara yuga just begun, and the population of the world proliferated,

15 And the thousand-eyed deity Sahasrākṣa-Indra withheld rain, and the planet Guru Bṛhaspati moved in retrograde orbit, and Soma the Moon swung erratically towards the south,

16 And not even a dewdrop could be seen, let alone clouds. Rivers turned into rivulets, and some even dried up and disappeared.

17 As if decreed by fate, lakes, streams, wells and fountains, bereft of watery beauty, vanished altogether.

18 Water, everywhere, dried up. Even the charitable water-dispensing spots for road-travellers closed down. Vedic studies and chanting of auspicious vaṣaṭs at rituals stopped,

19 As did agriculture, trading and cattle-rearing. Poles for tethering animals at yajña-sacrifices disappeared, mahā festivals were cancelled.

20 Heaps of skeletons and bones were seen everywhere, mahā-terror filled the populace. Towns and villages emptied, and rural habitations were set on fire.

21 Traumatised by weapon-wielding robbers and by rājās, suspecting and fearing each other, people fled, turning the world into a wilderness.

22 Abandoned were the abodes of deities, forsaken were children and the elderly, and cattle and sheep and goats and buffaloes, each devouring the other.

23 Brahmins were slaughtered, along with guardians of law and order. Medicinal herbs and other vegetation withered. The earth became a horror-ground of agonising creatures.

24 It was during this calamitous Kāla, Yudhiṣṭhira, that Dharma disappeared, and hunger-crazed humans turned into cannibals.

25 Ṛṣis abandoned worshipping the fire god Agni. They fled from their āśramas, looking for means of sustenance.

26 This was the time when the percipient bhagavan mahā-ṛṣi Viśvāmitra, homeless, wandered here and there,

27 Leaving his wife and children where they were safe, giving up fire-worship, looking for food, clean or unclean.

28 And in the course of his search, he chanced on some huts in a forest inhabited by violent hunters obsessed with the killing of animals.

29 Scattered around the huts were broken pieces of pottery and dog-skins, also bones of boars and asses, and cups made out of skulls.

30 Skins stripped from corpses were spread on the ground, side by side with withered flowers. There were also garlands of sloughed-off snake-skins.

31 Cocks everywhere crowing "kukkuṭa-kukkuṭa", and asses braying noisily. And the hunters, shrilly quarrelling and arguing and shouting.

32 And in their god-abodes were flocks of owls hooting their presence. Iron bells tinkled in the huts, around which roamed packs of wild dogs.

33 Afflicted with acute hunger, the mahā-ṛṣi Viśvāmitra entered the cluster of huts looking for something to eat.

34 Kauśika-Viśvāmitra moved from hut to hut begging for food, but found nowhere any meat, rice, roots or fruits.

35 "Aho! How terrible for me!" muttered the grandson of Kuśika, and collapsed in a heap in the centre of the Cāṇḍāla cluster of huts.

36 And then, O finest of earth-lords, the muni said to himself, "What's best for me now? What is the point of dying uselessly like this?"

37 It was then, O rājā, that the muni suddenly spotted a large chunk of dog-flesh, fleshly sliced with a sharp weapon, lying in front of a Cāṇḍāla's hut.

38 He mulled over one thought, "I'll have to steal this meat. There is no other way I can keep my *prāṇa*-breath going.

39 In a dire emergency, it is permitted, it is a duty, they say, for a Brahmin to steal from a person of high rank, an equal, or an inferior.

40 He should first choose an inferior to steal from. If that fails, an equal. And if that fails, then an eminent man, even one devoted to dharma.

41 I'll die if I don't, so I'll steal the meat from here. I see no crime in taking away dog-meat from a low-caste Cāṇḍāla."

42 O Bharata descendant! Hardly had he thought this than the famished mahā-muni Viśvāmitra dropped off to sleep where he had collapsed.

43 And, when deep darkness descended on that cluster of huts, bhagavān Viśvāmitra opened his eyes, and rose and warily entered the Cāṇḍāla's hut.

44 Eyes sticky with mucus, the Cāṇḍāla lay sprawled inside, snoring fitfully, a grisly-looking creature. Suddenly he woke up and said:

45 "All the Cāṇḍālas are sleeping. Not me, I am awake. Who dares enter my hut to steal my meat? I will kill you! You will die!"

46 Frightened, and ashamed as well because of what he had planned to do, Viśvāmitra said:

47 "I am Viśvāmitra! *Āyuṣman*! May you live long! I am famished, I am dying of hunger. O intelligent one, look at me, do not kill me."

48 Hearing this plea of the mahā-ṛṣi Viśvāmitra of purified ātman, the Cāṇḍāla was disturbed. He rose from his bed.

49 With tears in his eyes, with deep respect he joined his palms in *añjali* and said to Kuṣikā's grandson: "Brahmin, what are you doing here so late at night?"

50 Viśvāmitra replied gently to the low-caste Mātaṅga Cāṇḍāla: "I am dying of hunger. My *prāṇa*-breath is leaving me. I must have a bite of dog-flesh.

51 My hunger compels me. A starving man has no shame. My hunger is the criminal. I must have this dog-meat.

52 My *prāṇa*-breath is fading. My memory is slipping. My śruti-wisdom is no more. I am weak, confused. What clean food, what unclean? I don't know.

53 I know it is adharma, but I must have that dog-meat. I begged everywhere, and nowhere did I get food. Then I came to your place,

54 And I know I am doing wrong, yet I will do it: I must have this dog-meat. The fire and Agni is the mouth of the gods, and their purohita. He is the radiant one, the purifier of all,

55 The all-consumer. So will I be as a Brahmin, the pure all-consumer. Dharma ordains it so." The Cāṇḍāla replied: "Maharṣi, listen to me,

56 And then do what you must do, without harming your dharma. O Brahmā-ṛṣi! What I will tell you about dharma needs listening to.

57 Learned people say a dog's more unclean than a jackal, and the uncleanest part of a dog is his haunch.

58 O mahā-ṛṣi! It was wrong of you, it was adharma, to decide to steal a Cāṇḍāla's possession, specially food that is unclean and forbidden for you to eat.

59 You must find some other way of saving your life, O Mahāmuni. What your greed for meat will do is simple – it will destroy your tapasyā.

60 You know the meaning of dharma. Why do you want to corrupt dharma? You are the finest of upholders of dharma. Don't discard dharma."

61 O bull-brave Bharata rājā! The advice of the Cāṇḍāla prompted hunger-afflicted mahā-muni Viśvāmitra to say:

62 "For a mahā-long time have I been running here and there for something to eat, but so far I have found nothing to fill my stomach and save my life.

63 A man who is dying of hunger should save himself by any means he can. After saving himself, he can attend to dharma.

64 The dharma of Indra is the dharma of Kṣatriyas, the dharma of Agni is the dharma of Brahmins. Brahma-fire is my strength; when famished, I will eat whatever I like.

65 No need to think twice when it comes to saving one's life. Better to live than to die – only the living practise dharma, not the dead.

66 I will eat forbidden food because I prefer life to death. My mind is made up. Take it any way you like.

67 The way the stars scatter darkness with light, I will dispel all my inauspiciousness with the power of my tapasyā and my knowledge."

68 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla said: "This food will not give you better *prāṇa*-breath, nor will it add to your life-span. It will not inspire you as ambrosial *amṛta* does. Beg for different alms-food, and eat that. Dog-flesh is not for the twice-born."

69 To which Viśvāmitra replied: "Śvāpaka-Cāṇḍāla, there is famine in the land, and no other meat can be had anywhere. I know this. I have no money. I am dying of hunger, I am desperate. I want this delicious dog-meat: to me it has the taste of all the six rasas."

70 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla said: "Brahmins, Kṣatriyas and Vaiśyas are permitted to eat the meat of the five five-clawed animals: rabbit, lizard, turtle, hedgehog and porcupine. Have respect for the śāstras, and do not eat forbidden food."

71 "Hungry Agastya," replied Viśvāmitra, "ate the anti-god Vātāpi. And I am desperate with hunger. I will eat this chunk of dog-meat."

72 "Don't!" warned the Cāṇḍāla. "Try again to get some other alms-food. Take this dog's backside meat if you must – but think again!"

73 "The learned and the educated," said Viśvāmitra, "know what dharma is all about. I will follow their example. What you call the dog's backside I consider to be purer than the cleanest food."

74 The Cāṇḍāla argued: "Wrong deeds are not Sanātana Dharma. Do not do what should not be done. Don't justify your wrong deed."

75 Viśvāmitra said: "Why would a ṛṣi do a wrong deed? Dog and deer – they are the same – both are animals. I see no wrong in eating dog-flesh."

76 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla said: "Ṛṣi Agastya did what he did for the welfare of Brahmins, and they authorised him to do it. Dharma is where misdeed is not. Brahmins are gurus, they have to be respected and protected by every available means."

77 Viśvāmitra replied: "I am a Brahmin. I have a body. This body is my friend. Of all things in this world, I love it dearly and I give it my pūjā-respect. I want to keep this body alive, which is why I want this dog-meat, and I am not worried by the cruelty you associate with it."

78 The Cāṇḍāla said: "O learned one! Men have preferred to die rather than eat food that is strictly forbidden. That is the way they fulfil their desires. Fulfil your desire by controlling your hunger."

79 Viśvāmitra said: "One cannot be sure of the fulfilment of one's desires in another life, but this much is sure: committing suicide by dying of hunger is bad karma in this life. If I am alive, I can always atone for my misdeed by vows and ātman-discipline. At the root of everything is to nourish one's body; so I will have the dog-meat.

80 Anyone with an enlightened ātman will see the merit of my eating dog-flesh, anyone with a confused ātman will not. Even if I have doubts in my ātman about what I am doing, just the eating of dog-flesh is not going to turn me into a Cāṇḍāla like you."

81 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla replied: "What can I say except that I am convinced that I must stop you from doing such a wrong deed. I'm a despicable Cāṇḍāla advising a noble Brahmin!"

82 Viśvāmitra said: "Cows keep drinking water from a pond in which frogs keep croaking. Don't think too much of yourself. Who gives you the right to expound on dharma?"

83 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla replied: "O twice-born one, I look upon you as my friend. I feel for you. Do what is best for you. Do not get tempted."

84 Viśvāmitra said: "If you are really my friend, if you want to save me, then give me that dog-meat. I know my own dharma, I know what's good for me."

85 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla replied:

"I will not give you this chunk of dog-flesh. I will not allow this food which belongs to me to be stolen from me. The doom of demerit will fall on both of us – I the giver and you, the receiver, the Brahmin."

86 Viśvāmitra said: "If, after doing this wicked deed today, I survive, I will perform a ritual for the recovery of mahā purity. Ātman cleansed, dharma regained. Tell me, which is better – the regaining of dharma or a successful suicide by not eating?"

87 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla replied: "When it comes to family dharma, your ātman is the witness and best judge of what is right or wrong. You know it to be wrong. A man who considers unclean dog's-meat as acceptable food, will eat anything."

88 Viśvāmitra said: "Granted that taking of unclean food, and eating unclean food, are blameworthy acts. However, if no violence is involved, and no falsehood, then the eating of what is forbidden food is not all that heinous a matter."

89 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla replied: "O Indra-among-the twice-born! If this is our justification for eating forbidden food, then what happens to the morality of the Vedas and to Ārya-dharma? Where then is the difference between forbidden food and permitted food? I see no real difference."

90 Viśvāmitra said: "Eating this or that is not so gruesome a crime as to degrade a person's moral strength. 'Drinking wine corrupts a person' – just words, nothing else. That applies to other so-called forbidden acts too. What I am going to do is in no way wicked and wrong."

91 The dog-eating Cāṇḍāla replied: "It is character that makes a learned man stay away from where he should not be, not do a wicked deed, and avoid blame. But if greed goads him to go ahead and feast on dog-flesh, then surely he is going to get punished."

92 Bhīṣma continued: The Mataṅga-Cāṇḍāla said as much to Kauśika-Viśvāmitra who took away the chunk of the dog's backside.

93 The mahā-muni, to save his own life, took the dog-meat to a forest along with his wife, planning to eat it.

94 It occurred to him that he should offer the meat ritually to the gods and sanctify it before eating it.

95 O Bharata-descendant! He began the *daiva* and pitṛ rituals, offering to Indra and other gods and the spirits of his ancestors.

96 The muni lit the sacred Brahmā-fire as prescribed, and propitiated Indra and Agni with *caru*-food offerings in proper portions.

97 And immediately Vāsava-Indra poured rain on the earth, invigorating plant life and food-producing crops.

98 Bhagavān Viśvāmitra cleansed his defects in the fire of his tapasyā, and after some time attained a mahā-marvellous fulfilment.

99 The finest of all twice-born munis gratified the gods and *pitṛs* and completed the ritual and ate the sanctified meat.

100 In an emergency, when it's a question of life or death, a noble-ātmaned learned man is justified in using any means to save himself from his desperate plight.

101 Let him use his intelligence and ingenuity for self-preservation. This is always so. Merits and blessings are acquired only by the living.

102 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira! What is important is to stay alive in this world. A learned man with a disciplined ātman should discriminate between dharma and adharma, and then act decisively.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-TWO

1 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "You declare as acceptable such horrific deeds, lacking any śraddhā, going against integrity, but I reject them, I consider them to be barbarous behaviour.

2 I am deeply shocked. You have turned upside-down my faith in dharma. You are confusing me. I am trying to make sense of what you say, but I fail to do so."

3 Bhīṣma replied: The dharma I am teaching you goes beyond the Vedas. It's the sweet honey of practical wisdom collected from a variety of sensible, enlightened, inseeing *kavi*-thinkers.

4 A rājā has to depend on miscellaneous wisdom from many sources. No real progress is made by pursuing a single-branching dogmatic dharma.

5 O Kaurava descendant! Use your intelligence and respect for the examples set by good men when you deal with dharma. Understand well what I am saying.

6 Victory is won only by those victory-seeking rājās who value the supremacy of wisdom. Learn to discriminate between one dharma and another.

7 A rājā's dharma can never be a single-branching dogmatic dharma. Weak indeed is the king who has not early in his life learnt this wisdom.

8 O Bharata descendant! A man who knows nothing of life's duality will be lost when confronted by life's duality. The sooner one learns this, the better.

9 Wisdom also needs to be used wisely, because people will judge the quality of any action in proportion to its conformity with conventional dharma.

10 Some, when they know, really know; others know, but only darkly. Keep this in mind, and learn only from those who really know, and who are virtuous.

11 Enemies of dharma prefer to abuse the śāstras, condemning them as useless if one wishes to acquire the artha of wealth and material success.

12 O king! Their aim in life is the use of knowledge for the acquisition of glory and the pleasures of kāma. These are the evil ones of this world, the defilers of dharma.

13 They are the misguided ones, half-cooked intellectuals who do not know what is what. Unskilled in the true meaning of the śāstras, they exploit the śāstras.

14 Focusing only on the defects in the śāstras, they selfishly misinterpret the śāstras. Their recurring criticism is: "Pointless; it makes no sense."

15 Their teachings flourish on their abuse of the teachings of others. Language their strategy and words their arrows, they bleed ideas to death and suck dry the milk-filled udders of knowledge.

16 O Bharata! These knowledge-sellers and culture-commercialisers are the real rākṣasas. They are the fraud-expert detractors of dharma.

17 Maghavat-Indra himself quoted Bṛhaspati as saying: "Dharma is not something that can be grasped by words or even by intelligence."

18 There is always a reason to whatever is said in this world. Some, of course, always refer back to the śāstras to discover the reason behind everything.

19 Still others, very learned ones, declare that whichever way the world goes is dharma. No paṇḍit, however, can know all about dharma on his own – he needs the help of virtuous people.

20 If one studies the śāstras in haste, one will get perplexed, O Bharata, and no one will listen seriously to the discourses of such a person.

21 A learned man is praised when his words are echoed by his listeners. Then revealed scripture is irrelevant. Discussion has removed ignorance and provided knowledge. This is eminently commendable.

22 Uśanas advised the Daityas: "Argue it out. Remove your doubts." Use reason-knowledge to test śāstra-knowledge.

23 Who will listen, Yudhiṣṭhira, to your un-argued, rootless faith in idealism? As good as useless is a mind that cannot make up its mind.

24 Can't you see that you were created for the performance of cruel karma? Why do you deceive yourself by ignoring what I say?

25 Come! Look at me, learn from me. See what the ways of a rājā should be. See how another – I mean Viśvāmitra – found his freedom, and with it his happiness.

26 The goat, the horse, and the Kṣatriya were created by Brahmā to be sacrificed. These three make life's journey smooth for others.

27 According to smṛti-tradition, the crime of killing one who should not be killed equals the crime of not killing one who should be killed. Weak kings don't practise this.

28 A rājā has to be strict and harsh to ensure that his subjects abide by their sva-dharma; otherwise, they will devour each other like a pack of wolves.

29 A blot on all Kṣatriyas is a rājā in whose land robbers go about looting people, like crows stealing fish from a lake.

30 O rājā, gather around you men who are wise in the Vedas and come from good families, and rule the earth by protecting your subjects with dharma.

31 A eunuch of a Kṣatriya is a king who fails in his duties, who behaves unjustly, and acts on the advice of ignorant and inefficient ministers.

32 Dharma does not recommend brutality. Nor does dharma recommend lenience. Avoid both. Be harsh first, and, then, if so required, be gentle.

33 Kṣatriya dharma is a hard dharma. I feel for you. But you have been created thus : your karma will be harsh and terrible. Accept this fact, and rule your kingdom.

34 O bull-brave Bharata! Remember the wise advice of Śukra: "In times of crisis, discipline and punish the wicked, and protect the cultured."

35 Yudhiṣṭhira asked: "O Pitāmaha! O finest of all possessor of goodness and virtue! Tell me: Is there any thing that should never be violated?"

36 Bhīṣma replied: The supreme purifier is to be at the service of Brahmins who are deeply wise, devoted to tapasyā, and of unimpeachable character.

37 Behave with such Brahmins, O king, as you behave with the gods. Enraged Brahmins can create great trouble of all kinds.

38 Please them, and increase your glory. Displease them, and invite disaster. A pleased Brahmin is sweet nectar, an enraged Brahmin is poison.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THREE

1 "Pitāmaha!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "O mahā-wise patriarch! You are well-versed in all the śāstras. Tell me about the dharma of a person who offers shelter to one who seeks refuge."

2 O finest of the Bharatas! (replied Bhīṣma) It is mahā-dharma to offer shelter to one who seeks refuge. The question you have asked, mahārāja, is worhy of you.

3 O rājā! A succession of rājās from Śibi onwards, all of them mahātmā kings, attained the supreme goal of life because they offered refuge to protection-seekers.

4 We have heard of a pigeon who respectfully greeted a refuge-seeker, an enemy of his, and offered him his own flesh to eat.

5 "How did that happen, O Bharata descendant?" asked Yudhiṣṭhira. "A pigeon offering his own flesh to his enemy! What did he gain by this?"

6 Bhīṣma replied: Listen, O rājā, to this celestial kathā which cleanses the listener of all defects. It was the Bhārgava Paraśurāma who narrated it once to king Mucukunda.

7 O bull-brave Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira! It was king Mucukunda, in fact, who placed this very question before the Bhārgava.

8 And so, O lord of men, the Bhārgava Paraśurāma told his eager listener this story about a pigeon who found the highest fulfilment.

9 Listen, O mahā-muscled rājā (said the Bhārgava muni) to this *kathā* which is filled with lessons relating to dharma, and also kāma and artha.

10 There was this fearful fowler, a calamitous killer like Kāla, who roamed a mahā-forest in search of birds to kill.

11 He was pitch-black like a kākola-crow, his eyes were bloodshot. He looked like Kāla personified with his long legs, stubby feet, and mahā-mouth with mahā-wide cheeks.

12 He had no friends, no acquaintances, and no relatives. They all stayed away from him – he was such a horror. Such a cruel monster.

13 Which is natural – the wicked are shunned by the good. How can a man who harms himself morally do good to others?

14 A cruel, ill-ātmaned, life-threatening man – it is natural for people to treat him as they would a venomous snake.

15 O ruler of men! He used to fan out daily in the forest, trap birds in his net, kill then, and sell them as bird-meat.

16 This ill-ātmaned bird-hunter did this as his daily routine. A very long time passed, without he realising what he did was adharma.

17 All that time, he had his wife with him, and such was the pleasure she gave him that, as fate would have it, he knew nothing better.

18 It so happened one day, he was scouring the forest when a mahā-storm suddenly struck the towering trees with such force that they shook to their roots.

19 Dark clouds shrouded the sky, and maṇḍala lightning patterns flashed intermittently. The sky looked like an ocean littered with cloud-boats.

20 Ecstatic was Śatakratu-Indra when the storm-clouds burst, and he deluged the earth with torrential downpours.

21 What a welter of waters it was! The bird-hunter was stupefied; trembling and wet and cold, he wandered in the forest in a daze.

22 All the paths in the forest were submerged in a sheet of water. Low ground and high ground had become a level stretch of water.

23 Helpless storm-struck birds lay on the ground, some dead, others dying. Stray deer and lions and boars could be seen scurrying to safety on whatever high ground they could find.

24 Traumatised by the storm, panicky, frightened, famished, many could be seen huddled in groups here and there in the forest.

25 Numb with cold, the bird-hunter did not dare stop, though moving on was very difficult. It was then he noticed a she-pigeon on the ground, her body stiff with cold.

26 Himself suffering, the wicked-ātmaned bird-hunter picked up the paralysed she-pigeon and slipped her inside his cage.

27 Wickedness had become second nature to this wicked-natured fowler. Suddenly, he saw, looming in front of him a huge cloud-dark tree,

28 A tree fashioned by the World-Creator to give shelter and shade and fruit and flower to birds and other forest creatures.

29 Suddenly the sky cleared, and the sky was again a sprinkle of stars, like a lotus blossoming happily in a large lake.

30 A star-studded sky like a lotus-lovely lake! Seeing the sky now cloudless, the bird-hunter, still shivering with cold,

31 Moved on, looking all around him; worried, O *prabhu*-lord, he thought: It is late night now, and I am far away from my village.

32 He made up his mind to spend the night under the tree. Joining his palms in *añjali*, he humbly addressed the tree:

33 "O gods of this tree, grant me shelter!" Saying this, he made a bed-spread with leaves at the foot of the tree, rested his head on a stone slab, and in no time the afflicted man fell asleep.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FOUR

1 Bhīṣma continued: Now, living in the branches of that tree, O rājā, was a lovely-feathered pigeon, along with his friends.

2 His wife had gone out early in the morning searching for food, and it was late night now, and she had not yet returned. Her husband was sorely anxious.

3 "What a terrible storm! And what a deluge of rain! And my dear wife is not back yet! What can be the reason for her delay?

4 O my beloved wife! What can be keeping you back in this forest? I feel so lost and lonely without you. Empty is my nest without you.

5 What good are sons and grandsons and daughters-in-law and servants? No house is a home without a wife.

6 Home even is a wrong word to describe a house. 'Wife-place' would be more correct. A house without a housewife is a wilderness.

7 The lovely-pink-eyed one, the brilliantly plumaged one, the sweetly cooing one – useless is my life if the wife I love does not return today.

8 That sweet-vowed lady does not eat till I eat, she does not bathe till I bathe, does not sit till I sit, does not sleep till I sleep!

9 When I laugh, she is happy. When I grieve, she is sad. She pines when I am absent. She speaks loving words to me when I lose my temper.

10 What a husband-devoted *patī-vratā* lady she is! Rejoicing in her love for her husband! Dedicated to the welfare of her husband! Happy and blessed the man who has such a wife!

11 That lady of tapasyā knows I am tired and distressed and hungry. That illustrious lady loves me with the deepest and sweetest bhakti.

12 Even the foot of a tree is home to a man whose wife is with him; with a wife absent, even a palace is like a desert.

13 A wife is the one at your side when it comes to dharma, artha and kāma. A wife is the friend you can trust when travelling abroad.

14 The richest wealth you have is your wife. What better companion than a wife can there be for a man who embarks on the journey of life?

15 What better medicine can there be than a wife for a sick man and a suffering man? What better remedy for life's troubles?

16 There is no friend like a wife. There is no refuge like a wife. And when it comes to acquiring dharma, no one is more helpful than a wife.

17 A man who does not have a chaste, sweet-speaking wife – let him go and live in a forest. Home and forest to him are the same."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-FIVE

1 Listening to the fowl's lament, the she-pigeon the fowler had trapped was deeply moved and thought:

2 "Aho! What great good fortune is mine to have such a loving husband! I don't even know if I have the virtues he credits me with!

3 No wife is a wife if her husband is not happy with her. Even the gods are happy with her if her husband is happy.

4 It is the god of fire Agni who himself is the witness of a marriage. Supremely and divinely sanctified is a husband. Like a flowering creeper in a consuming forest-fire,

5 Reduced to ashes is the woman whose husband is not happy with her." These were the thoughts of the suffering she-pigeon, with her husband

6 Locked in sympathetic grief, to whom she said: "I will speak what is good for you. O my dear husband, please do what I say.

7 O my beloved, you must help the person who seeks your shelter. This fowler has come to you. He needs help.

8 Numb with freezing cold, he is lying here, helpless. He deserves your pūjā-respect. Killing a *dvija*-Brahmin or a world-mothering cow

9 Is the same crime as killing someone who seeks your shelter. The dharma of the pigeon-species is our dharma; we were created this way.

10 You know that this is so, so you should behave accordingly. The householder who follows his *gṛhastha*-dharma as best as he can

11 Attains the undecaying realm after he dies – so have I heard. You have sons, O *dvija*-bird, your lineage is secure.

12 Now is the right time for you to give up your sentimental attachment to your body, and follow dharma and artha. Offer such pūjā-respect to the suffering fowler as will delight his heart.

13 O my dear bird-husband! Have no qualms over me. Carry on with your life's journey. You can always find another wife."

14 Saying this, the tapasyā-abiding she-pigeon, trapped in the cage, enduring deep anguish, looked up at her husband.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SIX

1 These words, so full of dharma (continued Bhīṣma), spoken by his wife, delighted the pigeon, so much so that tears of happiness swam in his eyes.

2 He glanced at the bird-catcher whose source of livelihood was the slaughter of birds, and offered him the pūjā-respect that tradition deems proper for such a person.

3 "You are welcome here," he said. "Tell me, how can I be of help to you? Have no fear. Treat this place as your home.

4 Tell me quickly, what would you like? What can I do for you? I ask this out of love. You have come here seeking shelter.

5 Even an enemy coming to one's home deserves to be respected. Even a threatened tree does not refuse shade to a woodcutter.

6 A shelter-seeker deserves to be treated like an honoured guest. This is the special duty of a householder whose life revolves around the performance of the five yajñas.

7 If a householder fails to do so, dharma declares that he gets the benefits neither of this world nor the world after this.

8 Trust me and tell me what you need. Speak to me openly. I will do whatever you say. Don't give in to grief."

9 The bird-catcher replied to the pigeon: "I am numb with cold. Save me before I die of cold."

10 The pigeon placed dry leaves on the ground, and flew off as fast as he could in search of fire.

11 He spotted a heap of smouldering embers, sped back, and kindled a blaze from the dry leaves.

12 It was quite a mahā-blaze. Turning to the shelter-seeker, the pigeon said: "There! You have nothing to fear now. Warm your limbs, and rest."

13 The fowler said, "Whatever you say," and warmed his body before the blaze. The fire put new life in him. He said to the pigeon:

14 "I am so hungry. Give me somehing to eat." To this the bird replied:

15 "I have nothing here with me to give you as food. I'm just a bird in this forest. We birds live on whatever pickings we gather each day.

16 We are not like the munis in the forest who put by something for tomorrow."-The pigeon said this, and he felt sorry, and his face paled.

17 O excellent Bharata! He started asking himself, "What do I do now? Look at the way I live! I am a useless pigeon."

18 Then, placed, a thought struck him, and he said to the fowler : "Wait! I think I can do something. Wait just a little."

19 He placed more dry leaves in the fire, which now blazed furiously. Mahā-delighted, he said to the fowler:

20 "From ṛṣis and gods and pitṛs and mahātmās I have heard that it is mahā-dharma to offer pūjā-respect to a guest.

21 Dear friend, be gracious to me. I am telling you the truth. You are my pūjā-respect-worthy guest. This I do believe."

22 The pigeon said this. Then the mahā-minded bird circumambulated the fire three times in *parikrama* and, smiling, stepped straight into the flames.

23 The fowler saw the pigeon step inside the blaze, and was very upset, and said to himself: "What is this that I have done?

24 Aho! How horrendous will be my karma because of this cruel deed that I have done! There is no doubt of this. What I have done is the worst mahā-adharma."

25 He saw the pigeon give up his life, and he was depressed and he bitterly condemned himself, lamenting his karma that made him do what he did.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-SEVEN

1 Bhīṣma continued: The famished fowler saw the pigeon step inside the flames and, despite the intensity of his hunger, he was moved by compassion, and he said:

2 "I know I did it unknowingly, but what a cruel and heinous deed have I done! All my life will I have to suffer for this."

3 Condemning himself, he kept repeating: "I am untrustworthy. I am utterly wicked. I have always been wicked.

4 I have rejected good karma by taking up bird-killing as my profession. There is no doubt of it, I have been cruel, and I have been taught a lesson today

5 By this mahātmā pigeon who has sacrificed his flesh for me. I will give up my dear life, my sons, my wife.

6 This mahātmā pigeon has taught me the true meaning of dharma. From today I will give up all the comforts and delights of the body.

7 I will drain it dry, like a shallow pool that dries up in the heat of summer, with hunger and thirst and heat I will emaciate.

8 My body till it becomes a bony bundle of bulging veins. I will fast to death. Aho! By gifting me his own flesh this pigeon has shown how to pūjā-respect a guest.

9 I too will follow the path of dharma. Dharma is the only supreme goal. This finest of all birds has set the finest example of dharma."

10 Saying this, the cruel-karma bird-killer made up his mind, and vowed to embark on the never-returning-to-this-world *mahāprasthāna* journey.

11 He threw away his staff, his lime-coated śalākār-sticks, his net and bird-cage. He set free the she-pigeon, and left the spot.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-EIGHT

1 Bhīṣma continued: After the departure of the fowler, intense was the agony of the she-pigeon when she recalled the days with her husband. She wept copiously, and lamented:

2 "O my beloved! I cannot recall a single act of unkindness by you. Widows always mourn their lot, even if they are blessed with many sons.

3 Deprived of her husband, a suffering *tapasvinī*-wife is subjected to scorn and pity by relatives. You always pampered me, you honoured me with pūjā-respect.

4 Such care and sweetness and love did you shower on me! In mountain caves, on river banks, near fountains.

5 And on tall trees, I made love to you. And happily the two of us soared in the realm of the sky.

6 O my beloved! Where are they now – what is left of the lovely days we spent together? Limited is a father's love, a mother's, a son's –

7 Limitless is the love of a husband, which is why he is pūjā-respected. There is no protector like a husband, no joy-giver like a husband.

8 Forget wealth, forget everything – the refuge of a wife is her faith in her husband. With you not here, my lord, what good is my life to me?

9 What virtuous *satī*-wife will find life livable without a loving husband?" With such piteous grief, the deeply depressed

10 Husband-devoted *pati-vratā* wife rushed inside the blazing fire. There she saw her husband. He was adorned with *aṅgada*-bracelets,

11 He was seated in a chariot, surrounded by pūjā-respect-worthy noble-deed-doing mahātmās. He had a lovely robe on, and exquisite garlands and ornaments,

12 And he was ringed by crores of spiritual presences of pious karma, seated in chariots. This was the way the pigeon, seated in his chariot, ascended to heaven with his wife, a happy, noble, pūjā-respected couple.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FORTY-NINE

1 Bhīṣma continued: The fowler saw the bird-couple, O rājā, in the chariot, and worriedly wondered how he could attain a similar liberation.

2 "What tapasyā must I practise to attain this supreme goal?" With this determination, he set out on his journey

3 Of *mahā-prasthāna* liberation, inspired by the example of the pigeon. That bird-killer gave up struggle, subsisted on air, and focused his hopes only on attaining heaven.

4 He saw in front of him a lake-expanse of pure, cool waters filled with lotuses, swarming with many species of water-birds.

5 He was thirsty, O earth-ruler, and just the sight of a lake suffices to slake thirst. But strict fasting had also enfeebled him;

6 Still, he turned his eyes away from the lake, and confidently made his way to a forest inhabited by wild beasts – a mahā-wilderness.

7 In that forest, he got entangled in a clump of thorny bushes. They lacerated his body, criss-crossing it with streaks of blood.

8 In that unpeopled, wild-beast-populated forest he wandered aimlessly. A mahā-wind began blowing, striking at the tall trees; the friction created a forest-fire,

9 A fierce conflagration of mahā-intensity that consumed the tree-filled forest and the vines and creepers clinging to the trees,

10 Like the raging dazzling flames at the dissolution of the worlds at the end of a yuga. Scattered by the wind, sparks and embers

11 Laid waste that forest that teemed once with birds and ferocious beasts. Delighted, deeply desiring his body's mokṣa,

12 The bird-hunter rushed straight towards the consuming conflagration. He entered it, O excellent Bharata, and that very instant, defects destroyed in the forest-fire, purified in the flames, the hunter attained the supreme perfection.

13 Then, suddenly, he was rid of his fever of disquiet, and he found himself in a happy heaven, radiant like Indra surrounded by yakṣas, gandharvas and perfected Siddhas.

14 And that was how the pigeon, the husband-devoted *pativratā* pigeon's wife, and the bird-hunter – all three attained heaven by the strength of their pious karma.

15 Like the she-pigeon, a woman who follows her husband attains heaven speedily, and shines there like the radiant bird.

16 This is the ancient story of the mahātmā bird-killer and the pigeon, who by their pious karma attained the heaven that is attained by all who are devoted to dharma.

17 Anyone who narrates this story daily, as well as anyone who listens to it daily – even if they are careless and absent-minded – will never experience any inauspiciousness.

18 O strongest-of-all-who-are-strong-in-dharma! This is a mahā-dharma so powerful that it expiates even the crime of cow-slaughter of one who abides by it.

19 But the crime of a person who, refusing to give shelter, kills a person seeking refuge can never be expiated. Just listening to this *itihāsa*-story destroys ill deeds and dire distress, and takes a person to the realm of heaven.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY

1 "O finest of the Bharatas!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "How can one be cleansed of a crime done unknowingly? This I would like to know."

2 In this connection (replied Bhīṣma) there is a very old story which I will narrate to you, a story endorsed by ṛṣis, about what the Brahmin son of Śunaka, Indrota, said to Janamejaya.

3 This happened a long time ago. The mahā-valiant rājā Janamejaya was Parikṣit's son. He unknowingly killed a Brahmin.

4 As a result, the family purohita left him, along with all the other Brahmins. Remorse haunted the rājā day and night, and he retired to a forest.

5 His subjects also turned against him. He decided to do mahā-penance. Grief-stricken, he practised prolonged tapasyā.

6 That lord of men travelled to land after land all over the earth, meeting Brahmins and seeking expiation for Brahmin-murder.

7 This *itihāsa*-story that I am going to tell you is a lesson in dharma. Burning in the fire of his heinous deed, Janamejaya

8 In the course of his travels happened to meet Śaunaka-Indrota, a strict-vowed sage. He touched Indra's feet, and began gently massaging them.

9 Speaking harshly to the king, the ṛṣi said: "You are guilty of the mahā-crime of Brahmin-murder. What brings you here?

10 What have we to do with you? Don't touch me! No! Go away! You are not welcome here.

11 You have the stink of blood on you. You look like a corpse. Auspicious, yet inauspicious; living, yet dead – that's what you are.

12 Brahmin-killer! Unclean-ātmaned scoundrel! Steeped in evil! Awake, yet asleep! – And yet you think you are happy!

13 An utter waste is your life, O rājā, a life of terror and trauma. You were born for wickedness, you live for evil karma.

14 By tapasyā, by worshipping the gods, by chanting *vandanā*-prayers, by long patience, fathers hope to get sons who will bring them virtuous good and glory.

15 And see for yourself what hell you have created for your entire lineage of *pitṛs*. What high hopes they had of you – all utterly destoyed!

16 Men offer pūjā-respect to Brahmins to get heaven, long life, glory, and children – and you loathe Brahmins! What a waste!

17 When you leave this world, you will be punished for your evil karma. You will hang head downward for time ever-lasting time that will seem like eternity.

18 Blue-necked vultures with iron beaks will peck at you, and when you are reborn, it will be in an evil yoni.

19 If you think, O rājā, this world does not exist, how even another? – the messengers of Yama from the realm of Yama will remind you it does."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-ONE

1 Bhīṣma continued: Janamejaya replied to the muni: "I deserve to be condemned, I deserve your blame.

2 *Dhik*! Shame on one! I deserve this shame, and I thank you for it. I admit I did this wicked deed. I burn when I think of it, as if I am inside a blazing fire.

3 There is no peace in my mind when I think of the wickedness of my sva-karma. I know the fearful consequences that Vaivasvata-Yama has in store for me.

4 How can I carry on living with this dagger stuck in my heart? O Śaunaka, discard your anger, and tell me what I should do.

5 I have been as generous as Mahānāsa-Śiva himself with Brahmins, so I beg of you, give me another chance. Do not let my family line become extinct.

6 Extinct it will be if cursed by Brahmins. Approval of social sabhās, one-mindedness with relatives and friends –

7 Denied this, all I can hope for is advice from the eternally learned like you. Help me, like wealth-free, secluded sages helping others.

8 Those who do not perform yajñas never attain the supreme realm. They fall into hell, like the barbarous Pulinda and Śabara tribes.

9 O Brahmin! O Śaunaka! You are a wise pāṇḍit, I am a know-nothing. Be gracious, like a loving father favours a son."

10 Śaunaka replied: "What is so surprising in this? An ignorant man does do what he should not do. The pāṇḍit does not lose his temper over such a man.

11 From his palace of pure wisdom, he feels deep compassion for the suffering man; he himself is not suffering, and needs no compassion. He is on a hill-top, surveying wisely the earth below.

12 It's the person who despairs, who stays away from self-improvement, who earns social stigma – such a person never learns. Nothing surprising in this.

13 You know how useful and glorious the Vedas and other sacred texts are. Follow them, and find peace. Make Brahmins your refuge.

14 *Tāta*! Dear one! The Brahmins will approve, and the quality of your next life be assured. Be transparent in your repentance, and abide by dharma."

15 Janamejaya said: "Śaunaka, I sincerely repent my wicked deed. I will never violate dharma. All I want is someone to help and bless me."

16 Śaunaka said: "I will wipe out your pride and ego, O king. I wish you well. Cherish dharma, and seek the welfare of all creatures.

17 It is not fear, or weakness, or greed that makes me give you this advice. Listen, along with the Brahmins, to my celestial advice.

18 I do not want anything from you. I am only concerned with dharma. Let the whole world shout 'Hai! Hai!' Let them say, '*Dhik*! Shame on you!

19 You know nothing of dharma!' Let my friends and relatives leave me. Let them revile me after listening to what I have to say.

20 *Tāta*! Dear descendant of Bharata! Some mahā-wise persons will understand what I am saying. You too should realise that what I am saying is meant for the welfare of Brahmins.

21 For my sake, do your best for the welfare of Brahmins. Promise in front of me, O lord of men, that you will never do anything that will harm Brahmins."

22 Janamejaya said: "I touch your feet, and I promise I will never, in thought, word and deed, do anything to harm Brahmins."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-TWO

1 Śaunaka said: "Very well then. Since you are Śrīman, mahā-powerful Janamejaya, so deeply concerned with dharma, I will discourse to you on dharma.

2 It is wonderful indeed to have an earth-lord, so brutal and harsh once, transformed into a person who cares for the welfare of others.

3 People say a harsh and brutal ruler is like a world-consuming fire. You were like that once, but now you see the primacy of dharma.

4 To those who are deep in depravity, your giving-up of fancy food and other delights will certainly come as a surprise, Janamejaya.

5 For a weak-willed man to be generous, for a miserly man to be rich in tapasyā – is not all that remarkable. We see that happening time and again.

6 Repentance and embracing of hardship are good only if done after careful thought. Expiation is made precious if done after due deliberation.

7 O lord of the earth! There are five purifiers: yajña-sacrifice, charity, compassion, the Vedas, and truth. The sixth is well-performed tapasyā.

8 For a rājā, Janamejaya, the supreme purifier is tapasyā. Embrace it whole-heartedly if you seek the blessings of the finest dharma.

9 Visiting holy places is also said to be among the supreme purifiers. In this connection is the gāthā-verse chanted by Yayāti:

10 'If you seek long life,
so says the sage,
perform yajñas in youth
and tapasyā in old age.'

11 Sacred is Kurukṣetra, they say; more sacred than Kunkṣetra is the Sarasvatī; still more sacred are the Sarasvatī's *tīrthas*; most sacred is Pṛthūdaka.

12 Fear of premature death does not assail the man who bathes in it or sips its water. Proceed next to Mahāsara, the Puṣkara *tīrthas*, Prathasā, lake Manasā in the north,

13 Kālodaka, and the confluence of the Sarasvatī and Dṛṣadvatī, and Mānasarovara, and regain your energy and acquire long life.

14 Study the Vedas in these sacred sites, and bathe in them. Manu says the dharma of *tyāga*, of giving up, is the most purifying *saṁnyāsa*-renunciation.

15 In this connection is chanted the *gāthā*-verse composed by Satyavān:

'Every person should
be like a child,
beyond evil or good,
innocent, undefiled.'

16 What do the people know of real misery and real happiness? They know only physical misery and physical happiness, after which they die and merge with the phenomena of nature known as prakṛti.

17 What they leave behind are their good deeds or ill deeds. The glory goes to those who did the right renouncing. Let me now proceed to explain what is the best course of activity for a rājā.

18 O lord of men! Wield your power, be generous, share your affluence, and conquer heaven! Dharma belongs to the man who combines power with energetic enterprise.

19 Rule the earth and make Brahmins happy, O king. The ones you harmed earlier, honour and favour them now.

20 Ignore the fact that they said, '*Dhik*! Shame on you!' and forsook you. Depend on your ātman-darshan and decide never to harm Brahmins. Say, 'I will not hurt them.' Make this your duty, and excel yourself.

21 O foe-crushing king! One rājā is like fire, another is like ice. One is like a plough, another like lightning.

22 Stay away from the wicked, keeping in mind that you will be harmed. Do not get attracted by any special virtue in them, do not be long friends with them, do not get attached to them.

23 Any ill deed done once can be expiated by sincere repentance. A second ill deed can be expiated by saying, 'I will never do this again.'

24 An ill deed done a third time requires this pledge, 'I will do only what dharma demands.' Ill deeds done repeatedly can be expiated by pilgrimages to sacred *tīrthas*.

25 If you are looking to be blessed, see that your karma is blessworthy. Those who surround themselves with fragrance are the ones who smell sweet.

26 Those who surround themselves with foul smells are the ones who stink. A person who is ready to perform tapasyā expiates his ill deed the same day that he makes up his mind to do so.

27 Anyone accused of a crime gets expiation by performing the *agnihotṛ* ritual for one full year. A foetus-killer is freed if he performs the agnihotṛ for three years.

28 It is also possible to expiate foetus-killing by journeying at least a hundred yojanas to Mahāsara, the Puṣkara *tīrthas*, Prabhāsa and Uttara-mānasa.

29 Any killer of any species of creatures can expiate his crime of creature-killing by saving the lives of as many creatures of the species as he has killed.

30 Indeed, Manu has declared that by diving in water thrice and reciting the *aghamarṣaṇa* Ṛg-Veda japa, a man gets the merits of the *avabhṛta* bath of the Aśvamedha yajña.

31 All the ill deeds of the reciter are immediately cleansed, and he receives esteem from people who obey him as if they are mute and unthinking admirers.

32 In the distant past, O rājā, the gods and anti-gods went to the guru of the gods, Bṛhaspati, and said to him: 'O mahā-ṛṣi, you know what the fruits of dharma are, and also the fruits of such acts as lead to hell in the next world.

33 But what happens to the person who does both good and wicked deeds? Which of the two tilts the balance? Tell us, O mahā-ṛṣi, about the fruits of good-deeds. How does a dharma-devoted person cancel the consequences of his ill deeds?'

34 Bṛhaspati replied: 'A soiled garment is washed clean by using soap. If a man does an ill deed indeliberately, with no ill motive, he can cancel the consequences of his ill karma by conscious and deliberate performance of good deeds.'

35 After committing an ill deed, there is no point thinking, 'I am no good.' One should go ahead with śraddhā, and without malice of any kind work for the welfare of others.

36 Just as it is possible to mend a torn garment, it is perfectly possible to repair the ill deeds one has done by doing good deeds in the future for the welfare of others.

37 Like the rising sun dispelling the darkness of night, good karma can cancel bad karma."

38 Saying this (concluded Bhīṣma), Śaunaka-Indrota advised rājā Janamejaya to perform the Horse Sacrifice in the traditional manner.

39 And the defect-cleansed Śrī-splendid rājā, blazing like fire, entered his kingdom, wiped out his enemies, like the full moon in the sky.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-THREE

1 "Grancestor Pitāmaha!" asked Yudhiṣṭhira, "O rājā! Have you in your experience ever seen or heard of a dead man restored to life?"

2 Bhīṣma replied: Pārtha-Yudhiṣṭhira, a long time ago a conversation took place in the Naimiṣa forest between a vulture and a jackal. Listen to that *itihāsa*-story.

3 There was this Brahmin who, after considerable hardship, was blessed with a beautiful large-eyed son who died painfully while still a young boy.

4 The all-in-all delight of the family, to perish in the flower of boyhood! Bitterly did the family and its well-wishers mourn.

5 They carried the little boy's corpse to the cremation ground. There they broke down, sat on the ground, and wept uncontrollably, each passing the corpse to the other.

6 They recalled their days with the child, and their grief increased. They could not leave the corpse and return home.

7 Their lamentation reached a vulture, and he approached them and said: "Go away. He's just one child. Leave him. Don't delay.

8 Hundreds and thousands of men and women are brought here all the time, and are left behind by their relatives.

9 Look, what's this world but a mix of joy and sorrow? Meeting and parting – first one, then the other.

10 The living bring the dead here, and then they go back, and when their time comes, they are brought dead here.

11 This is a horrible place, the haunt of jackals and vultures. A place for skeletons, a fearful place for the living. Leave this place. Don't linger here.

12 Love a person or hate a person – it will not help. There is no hope for a victim of Kāla-dharma. There is no escape: if you breathe, you will die.

13 You are flesh, you are mortal, you will die. You are born, you will die. And who can bring you back to life once you are dead?

14 The daily rounds of people are over, the sun is setting in the Asta hills. Give up this affection for your boy, and go home."

15 O king, they heard the advice of the vulture and, still loudly lamenting, the relatives left the body of the boy, and went back.

16 After all, the boy was dead, and all their grief was not going to ever give them a darshan of their departed son.

17 It was now clear to them that this was the final end, so they gave up any hope they had, however little, and took the road back to their homes.

18 Just then a jackal, as dark-skinned as a raven's feather, turned up, slinking out of its hole, and said, "How heartless humans are!

19 You fools! The sun hasn't set yet. What are you afraid of? Anything can happen any time. Don't you have any feelings at all? Any time your boy can come back to life.

20 Don't you have any love for your son? How can you leave the little one alone on the cremation ground? What's wrong with you?

21 Don't you remember how sweetly your little boy babbled as a baby? Don't you remember how your heart melted when he did that?

22 Birds and beasts get no rewards for loving their young. But humans do. The love for their young is the same for humans and animals.

23 But the love of birds and beasts and insects bears no fruit in the next life, like the yajña-rituals performed by selfless munis.

24 They get no return at all for the affection they lavish on their offspring – no return in this life or in the next.

25 These children do not care for their parents when they grow up, but don't the mother and father feel deeply the absence of their little ones?

26 And here you are – human beings uncaring for their child! He is your son, after all. How can you desert him like this?

27 Look long and lovingly at him, weep for him. It is very very hard to part with someone you have loved.

28 When you have no money, when you are charged in a court case, when you are carried to the funeral pyre, who stands by you? Your relatives. None else.

29 All love life, and all get loved, one way or other. Look at the love you find in abundance in birds and beasts and insects!

30 This large-eyed boy, this lotus-eyed boy, all bathed and garlanded with flowers like a bridegroom ready to receive a bride – how you can desert him like this?"

31 Touched by the plaintive arguments of the jackal, the members of the family retraced their steps from the sake of the dead boy.

32 "Aho!" admonished the vulture. "You pathetic people! Turning back because of this silly cruel and wicked jackal!

33 His five senses have left him, he is dead as a stick, in front of your eyes. Why grieve for him? Isn't it better to grieve for yourselves?

34 Go in for severe tapasyā, and cleanse yourself of defects. Tapasyā is the panacea, not this moaning and whining.

35 When the body is born, misfortune is born with it. What can be done? It's the boy's ill luck that is causing all of you so much misery.

36 Wealth, cattle, gold, jewels, children – they are the fruits of the root which is tapasyā. You get them by tapasyā-yoga.

37 It's your deeds that determine what joys and sorrows become the lot of human beings. At the time of your birth, you bring your clutch of joys and sorrows with you.

38 The karma of a father has no influence on a son, and the karma of a son has no influence on a father. Their paths are different, determined by the good deeds or bad deeds of either.

39 Practise dharma diligently, shun adharma. According to the needs of the time, attend on gods and Brahmins.

40 Cast off grief and despair, give up all this sentimental affection for your son. Leave him in this open ground, and go home.

41 The good karma you do and the bad karma you do – you will have to face the consequences. How will relatives help?

42 Relatives come here, leave a dearly loved one, and go. They do not linger. They have tears in their eyes, but they stop being sentimental.

43 We are all in the clutches of Kāla – wise or foolish, rich or poor, good-doer or ill-doer.

44 All this grief – how does it help you? How will it help the one who is dead? Cosmic Time Kāla is the *prabhu*-lord of all. His dharma is to see all inpartially.

45 Be young, be a baby, be old, be a foetus in the womb – death has you in his grip. This is the way the world is."

46 The jackal interrupted him, saying: "Aho! It was your love for your son that made you grieve so deeply for him. This stupid vulture has demeaned your love.

47 So sane, so well-timed, so convincing – and so impressed are you with his words that you are ready to go back home. How incredible!

48 Aho! I thought it was dreadful grief to see a loved child lying dead in a desolate spot – a grief like that of a cow mourning over a calf.

49 Today I have realised what that grief can be, for I have seen with my own eyes such a depth of love that I cannot hide my tears.

50 One should never stop trying. If one succeeds, let fate take the credit. Fate and human effort go hand in hand.

51 Hope always for the best. When has despair ever led to happiness? How can you succeed without even trying? How can you be so feelingless? How can you go back?

52 He is your own flesh and blood, he is half of your body, the continuer of your *pitṛ*-lineage – how can you abandon him like this?

53 At least, wait till the sun sets, and saṁdhyā-twilight comes. Then decide to take your son away, or stay here."

54 The vulture said: "Listen to me, all of you humans! I am over a thousand years old, and to this day I have not seen a man, woman or eunuch revived after death.

55 Some die in the womb, some die instantly after birth, some die crawling, some die in their youth.

56 Transitory too is the life-span of birds and beasts. All moving and unmoving life has a built-in obsolescence.

57 Consumed with grief for a loved dead wife, for a dead son, they come here, so many, every day, and then they go back home.

58 They leave them behind, hundreds of loved ones, and thousands of unloved ones, and the family members go back grieving to their homes.

59 This one here – he is lifeless, he is a stick of wood. He is now in another body. This corpse is just a block of wood, that's all.

60 His jīva-ātman has found another body. Why don't you leave him and go? Your love is useless; there is nothing you can do.

61 He cannot see you, he cannot hear you. Why don't you leave him, and go back to your homes without wasting time?

62 This is not harsh and bitter advice that I give you. These are reasonable arguments connected with mokṣa-dharma and spiritual fulfilment. Listen to me – go back, now!

63 Listen, all of you! What I have said is full of wisdom and logic. It is meant for intelligent people who see things clearly. Now, go back!

64 Staring at his corpse and recalling his past relations with you will double your misery." The words of the vulture persuaded the people to go back. In the meantime, the jackal turned up, and saw the boy's corpse as if asleep.

65 The jackal said: "What's this? Look at this handsome gold-complexioned boy, glittering with ornaments! How can you listen to this vulture, and abandon him who is entitled to offer *piṇḍa*-obsequies to *pitṛs*?

66 Leave him if you must, but that will not lessen the poignance of your grief nor will it end your lamentation. On the contrary, rest assured, your suffering will increase.

67 We have heard upholder-of-truth Rāma restored dharma by killing the Śūdra Śambuka which act resuscitated a Brahmin boy after his premature death.

68 Also, the rāja-ṛṣi's Śveta's son died prematurely but devoted-to-dharma Śveta succeeded in bringing him back to life.

69 It is perfectly possible for a perfected muni or a god to appear and have compassion on you, seeing the intensity of your grief."

70 The love-anguished, grief-torn relatives heard the jackal, returned, fondled the boy's head in their lap, and moaned. The vulture said:

71 "Wet him with your tears, massage him and fondle him – it's no use. The god of death Dharmarāja has ordained a prolonged sleep for him.

72 Tapasyā-practisers, wealth-accumulators, mahā-scholars – death targets them all. This is the place of the dead.

73 This is the place where relatives flock in thousands, day and night, and go away, sadly, leaving behind thousands of young and old.

74 Why this passionate moaning and waiting? No use, no use. Dead is dead – you cannot bring the dead back to life. Hundreds of jackals can offer their lives

75 For his sake for hundreds of years, but this boy will remain dead. This boy – only if Rudra-Śiva, Kumāra, Brahmā or Viṣṇu

76 Were to grant a boon – only then might this little one revive. Shed as many teass as you like, lament your loudest lamentation,

77 Sigh your deepest sighs, he is gone for good. I, the jackal, you, and all the members of the boy's family –

78 We are all travelling the same road, with our own loads of dharma and adharma. Unpleasantness, bitter words, hatred, wives of others,

79 Adharma, untruth – the wise man learns to avoid all these. Dharma, truth, śruti-wisdom, mahā-compassion for all the world's creatures,

80 Absence of guile and crookedness – this is the path to travel. Mother and father, family members and friends –

81 Your dharma suffers if you ignore their well-being during their lifetime. But here is a boy whose eyes do not see, whose body does not move,

82 Who is thoroughly dead and gone – how are your tears of any use to him?" With burning grief in their hearts, and tears flooding their eyes, the family members placed the boy's corpse on the ground, and made their way back, after listening to the words of the vulture.

83 The jackal exclaimed: "This world of human beings – what a horrible world! All die, everything breaks up, relatives part, life is short.

84 Look at all the accusing and the lying, the bitterness and unpleasantness. All that goes on here only adds to grief and agony.

85 Not even for the briefest moment do I find any pleasure in it. Aho! *Dhik*! Shame on you! You fools, duped by the vulture's words,

86 You have given up whatever soft feelings you had for your son, and you are off to your homes! What kind of men are these? Burning with grief for their dead son, they turn round,

87 Taken in by a wicked-ātmaned, criminal vulture! Joy follows sorrow, and sorrow follows joy –

88 Joy and sorrow are inextricably linked. Joy is not forever, nor is sorrow. Dumping this handsome boy on the ground,

89 This ornament of his family, this good-looking flower of youth, abandoing this *śrī*-radiant child, you fools, where are you going?

90 Listen, all of you! I see this boy alive still, no doubt of it. He did not deserve to die. He will be a source of happiness to you.

91 This intense grief for your dead son has made you feelingless – dead, it would seem. Do not leave! You are small-minded, indeed, to think only of your own convenience, and leave this little one forlorn, alone."

92 O king! (continued Bhīṣma) with this ruse that violated dharma, that jackal, that night-haunter of the cremation ground, seeking to fill his own belly,

93 With words as sweet as honey-nectar, succeeded in preventing the members of the boy's family from returning to their homes – all for his own selfish ends.

94 The vulture said: "This part of the wood is a fearful place. It is infested with *preta*-spirits, yakṣas and rākṣasas, and hooting owls.

95 It is horrendous, it is horrible, as fearsome as a dark-blue storm-cloud. Leave this corpse and busy yourself with the *preta-kārya* obsequies.

96 Before the sun sets, before darkness shrouds the different directions, leaving the corpse here, go away and perform the funeral rites.

97 Hawks fiercely screaming, jackals howling, Indra-among-beasts lions roaring – and sun setting . . .

98 Trees grimy black with the smoke of the funeral pyres, and hungry carnivores of the cremation ground prowling for prey . . .

99 Deformed beasts everywhere waiting to pounce . . . flesh-eating creatures all of them . . .

100 You are in great peril here. Cruel animals populate this place. This boy is now just a block of wood. Don't listen to the jackal.

101 If you forget commonsense and accept the wild and useless advice of the jackal, you are doomed."

102 The jackal said: "Don't move! So long as there is sunlight, you have nothing to fear. Show your love for the by till then.

103 Look at him lovingly till them. Of course this is a fearful place. But you have no reason to be afraid.

104 Desolate wilderness it may be, but in no way is it frightening. It is a place of calm and quiet for *pitṛ*-spirits. The sun is still shining. Ignore this carrion-eater."

105 Bhīṣma continued: They were both hungry, the vulture and the jackal. One kept saying the sun had set, the jackal said it had not.

106 O rājā! Vulture and jackal clashed in a head-on debate. Both took recourse to quoting the sacred texts of the śāstras.

107 One a beast, the other a bird. Both brilliant in argumentative logic. It was an ambrosial debate. The men rose to go, then returned, then started to leave again.

108 Finally, worn out with grief and lamentation, they stayed back. How were they to know that they were being manipulated by beast and bird?

109 They stood there, at the receiving end of the excellent reason-mongering bird and beast over the corpse of the boy, until Śaṅkara-Śiva,

110 At the prompting of his devī Pārvatī, intervened. The eyes of the divinity glowed with compassion. Śaṅkara-Śiva said to the assembly: "I will grant you a boon."

111 After praṇāma-ing him, they said: "He was our only child. We are petrified with grief to the point of death.

112 Revive him, and so revive us too. This is our request." They pleaded before Bhagavān Śiva with tears in their eyes.

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113 He revived the boy and gave him the boon of a hundred years of life, and quelled the hunger of the jackal and the vulture –

114 Such was the boon of world-well-wishing Bhagāvan Pinākin-Śiva. Delighted and fulfilled, they prāṇama-ed the divinity,

115 And then, O radiant one, they returned to their homes. Unfailing optimism combined with unremitting hard work,

116 Blessed by the favour of the god-of-gods Deva-deva-Śiva, is sure to bring the fruits of success. Look how the union of divine help and the determination of the family

117 Removed the sufferings of these people and brought them happiness. See how all this happened in such a short time!

118 It was the grace of Śaṅkara-Śiva that replaced grief with joy. They were wonder-struck by the resuscitation of their dead son.

119 O rājā! O excelling Bharata! Laying aside their mourning for their son after receiving the favour of Śaṅkara-Śiva,

120 Happy of heart they returned with their son to the city. This behaviour is recommended for all the four castes.

121 This is an *itihāsa*-story replete with dharma, artha and mokṣa. It is auspicious. Whoever listens to it is happy in this world and in the next.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FOUR

1 "Say there is a very powerful person," Yudhiṣṭhira asked, "who cannot be avoided, who is able to do good or harm whenever he likes, and is always swift in taking action –

2 And let's say such a person is provoked by the unseemly conduct of a frivolous and not very respectable person who out of folly has behaved with him arrogantly – Pitāmaha,

3 Tell me, how should he try to save himself when the powerful man angrily tries to punish the weak culprit by teaching him a well-deserved lesson?"

4 Bhīṣma replied: O finest of the Bharatas! There is in this connection an ancient *itihāsa*-story: the debate of the Wind and the Śālmali-tree.

5 There was this mahā-lordly tree on a peak in the Himālayas. Centuries old, with an enormous trunk, and luxuriant foliage.

6 O mahā-muscled hero! It was a perfect shelter for elephants and other animals afflicted with summer heat.

7 A lordly *vanaspati* – fruited-and-flowering, the abode of parrots and *sārikā*-birds, thick-shade-giving, four hundred arm's lengths in girth.

8 And others too – bands of merchants and traders and tapasyā-practisers and forest-dwellers – what a lovely restful haven it was for them!

9 O bull-brave Bharata! Charmed by the massive trunk and far-spreading foliage of this tree, Nārada approached it and said:

10 "Aho! What a glory you are, O Śālmali! Aho! How enchanting! O incomparable tree! O incomparable tree! How lovable you are!

11 Dear one! *Tāta*! Lovely one! O heart-stealing tree! Bird-brooding tree! Elephant-and-animal-sheltering tree!

12 O multi-foliate mahā-branching tree!
O giant-trunked tree! What do I see?
O brilliant-boughed tree! Not a single branch
Of yours has the Wind been able to break.

13 Dear one! *Tāta*! What can it be? Is he a friend of yours? Does he love you so much that he singles you out and protects you always?

14 Very fierce, very fast is Bhagavān Wind. The big and the small trees fall when he blows, and even the peaks of mountains shiver.

15 This Wind, the purveyor of purity and fragrance dries even the subterranean realm of Pātāla, it dries lakes and streams.

16 Yes, it must be that Wind thinks of you as a very special friend. No wonder you sprout such lovely foliage and fruit!

17 *Tāta Vanaspati*! Dear lordly tree! How wonderful for you to have all this flurry of fine-feathered friends flourishing in you!

18 And in springtime, the season of flowers, how sweet to hear the trills of the various birds, and the heart-piercing symphony of all of them!

19 O Śālmali! Look at the glorious herds of elephants, the pride of their species, fatigued by summer heat, seeking your shade!

20 So many other animals also – all adding to your goodness and your glory. You who shelter all who come to you – you dazzle with the radiance of Mount Meru itself!

21 There are Brahmins who come to you, practising tapasyā. There are the Siddhas who come to you, perfected mortals who have practised tapasyā. There are naked *śramaṇa* ascetics who come to you. It seems to me that you are Triviṣṭapa heaven itself."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-FIVE

1 “Śālmali,” continued Nārada, “it must be that the everywhere-travelling and terrifying Wind considers you his friend, and so he protects you.

2 It must be, O Salmali, that you are always sweetly and humbly saying to him always, ‘I am yours’, which is why he looks after you so well.

3 Because nowhere do I see any tree, any hill, any house that excapes the Wind’s fury. You are the sole exception.

4 There must be a very special reason why you, and those who flock around you, are favoured by the Wind. O Śālmali, all of you, standing unharmed!”

5 “Brahmin,” replied Śālmali. “Wind is not my loved-and-loving *sakhā*-intimate, nor my relative, nor my friend. Wind is not some kind of Parameṣṭhin Supreme Lord Brahmā who protects me.

6 The thing is, Nārada, I have an energy that is more powerful and more fierce than his. His *prāṇa* is not one-eighteenth of mine.

7 When he goes about buffeting and breaking trees and hills and all else, I face him squarely, blocking his onslaught.

8 O deva-ṛṣi! I do this all the time – I block the attacks of this smasher and destroyer. So what if that angers him? I don’t fear him.”

9 “Śālmali,” said Nārada, “clearly your darshan of life is completely contrary to mine. I think nothing on earth is more powerful than Wind.

10 O lordly tree Vanaspati! Indra, Yama, Vaiśravaṇa-Kubera, and lord-of-waters Jalesvara-Varuna are not Wind’s equal. And you are only a tree!

11 O Śālmali! Every *prāṇa*-breath of every creature depends on wind-power. It is Prabhu-Lord Bhagavān Wind that provides breath-energy.

12 Disciplined and balanced prāṇa-breath is the essence of life. When that goes awry, life goes awry and disintegrates.

13 You are very little-minded indeed not to give pūjā-respect to Wind, who is the finest of life-infusers and supporters.

14 It seems to me, Śālmali, that you are a liar. You have no isness, no essence; you argue crookedly, you talk too much. Look, how angry you have made me!

15 In fact, I am so upset that I am going to meet Wind and I am going to repeat before him all the ugly things you have been saying.

16 Sandalwood, *syandana* trees, śāla trees, pine trees, deodars, *vetasa* canes and *dhanvana* rope fibres, and other trees also – all of them sturdy and powerful –

17 Even stronger than you, O wicked-thinking tree – they do not insult wind the way you have done. They know how strong they are, and they know how strong Wind is.

18 Which is why all those excellent trees namaskāra the supremacy of Wind. You are the foolish one who refuses to acknowledge his limitless strength. I will go this very instant to world-mothering Mātariśvan-Wind."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SIX

1 "Bhīṣma continued: O Indra-among-rājās! Finest-of-Brahma-knowers Narada said as much to Śālmali and proceeded to meet Wind, to whom he repeated Śālmali's words.

2 “Wind,” said Nārada, “high on a Himālayan peak is a flourishing śālmali tree with a large family of dependants. Big-trunked, many-branching, far-spreading. He despises you.

3 There are all kinds of ugly things he has said about you, not all of them fit enough, O Wind, to repeat before you.

4 I know you very well, O Wind. You are the foremost of all breathers of *prāṇa*-life-breath – the best, the greatest – resembling in wrath Vaivasvata-Yama himself.”

5 When he heard this report of Nārada (said Bhīṣma), Wind went and confronted Śālmali and angrily exclaimed:

6 “Śālmali, you have insulted me behind my back in front of Nārada. I am Vāyu, Wind. I am going to give you a taste of my power and my glory.

7 Tree, I know you only to well. At the time of the creation of the world, Prabhu-Lord Pitāmaha Brahmā relaxed in your shade.

8 Because he rested in your shade, I have been gracious to you, protected you. Wicked tree, do not imagine you are safe because you are strong.

9 Unlike others, you choose to insult me. Very well, I will give you such a darshan of my power that you will never dare insult me.”

10 Bhīṣma continued: Śālmali listened, and smiled a little and said, “Lose your temper, Wind! Show me your dreadful darshan!

11 Vent your anger on me! See if it has any effect! O Wind, O high-and-mighty *prabhu*-lord, I am not afraid of you.

12 I am higher-and-mightier than you. You don’t frighten me. It’s brain-power that makes a person strong,

13 Not brawn-power of *prāṇa*-breath power. Never think brawn is better than brain." Wind replied to Śālmali:

14 "Very well. I will give you a darshan tomorrow." It was night time by now. Time enough for Śālmali to think seriously, which he did,

15 And he came to the conclusion that Mātariśvan-Wind was right, and that he was weaker than Wind. "All that I said to Nārada was wrong.

16 Impossible for me to match Wind in sheer strength. He is definitely more powerful than me. Nārada was right : Wind has the upper hand.

17 There is no doubt at all that I am weaker than many other trees. On the other hand, no tree, however lordly, has my brain-power.

18 My brain-power will free me from wind-fear. If the other forest-trees use their brains,

19 No raging wind can ever harm them. But they are fools, and furious Wind takes advantage of their stupidity. But not me – I know."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-SEVEN

1 Bhīṣma continued: With this thought in mind, Śālmali, compelled to do so, divested himself of his branches, big and small, and lopped off all his leaves.

2 Shorn of all his branches, leafy shoots and flowers, the lordly tree stood there, waiting for the morning and Wind to make their appearance.

3 Uprooting mahā-trees as he rushed to keep his word, Wind sped through the forest, and stood in front of Śālmali.

4 He saw the tree bereft of branches and leaves and flowers, and he was overjoyed. He looked at the once-so-luxuriant Śālmali and smiled and said:

5 "Śālmali, this is exactly what in my anger I wanted to do to you. You have done this difficult deed for me.

6 You have no flowers now, no branches, no shoots, no leaves. You have followed your own crazy advice, and made yourself my willing victim."

7 Bhīṣma continued: Śālmali heard Wind's words and shamefully recalled the wisdom of Nārada. He was filled with regret.

8 O tiger-among-rājās! This is what happens when a weakling dares a powerful adversary. He suffers the fate of Śālmali.

9 No weak man should challenge a stronger rival. What happened to Śālmali will happen to him. Grief will be his lot.

10 Mahārāja! No mahā-ātmaned person provokes the hostility of a powerful opponent. He reveals his strength gently, in small doses.

11 It is not advisable for an unintelligent man to invite the hostility of an intelligent man. The intelligence of an intelligent man acts as swiftly as fire consuming dry grass.

12 O king! O Indra-among-rājās! For a human being, nothing is more precious than intelligence. No power can match intelligence.

13 O exterminator of enemies! Lie low before the more powerful than you. Overlook the foolish, the deaf and the dumb, as you have done.

14 O mahā-radiant rājā! Even the collective might of eighteen *akṣauhiṇis* of warriors will not equal the power of one Arjuna.

15 Pāṇḍu and Pākaśāsana-Indra's illustrious son Arjuna decimated the armies on the battlefield, relying on his own strength.

16 O descendant of Bharata! I have explained to you at length Rāja-dharma and Crisis-dharma. What else is there, mahārāja, that you would like to know?

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-EIGHT

1 "O bull-brave Bharata!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "What I would really like to know is: What is the source of ill deeds? How do ill deeds come into being?"

2 Bhīṣma replied: O lord of men! Listen to what is the source of ill deeds. It's the mahā-monster called greed. Only greed. Greed leads to ill deed.

3 Greed leads to ill deed, to adharma, to incalculable misery. Greed is the root of the wickedness which drives men to do ill deeds.

4 Greed produces anger, greed produces the lust of selfish kāma. Greed produces delusion, māyā, pride, arrogance, self-omnipotence, despising of others,

5 Unforgiving impatience, shamelessness, loss of *śri*-splendour, deterioration of one's dharma, anxiety, infamy – all these.

6 Also, miserliness, excessive craving, crooked karma, pride of birth and learning and good looks and prosperity,

7 Distrust of everyone, insincerity towards everyone, lack of faith in everyone, taking advantage of everyone,

8 Stealing others' property, ravishing others' wives, uncontrolled speech, mental imbalance, virulent criticism of others,

9 Excessive sensuality, gluttony, speedy death of frightful proportions, compulsive jealousy, habitual lying difficult to overcome,

10 Violent ejaculations of rasa-fluids, inescapable desire to eavesdrop, hatred, boastfulness, various kinds of evil-doing knowing full well that they are harmful –

11 All these are the products of greed. At birth, in infancy, childhood, youth, and in full maturity,

12 One never gets rid of all-gripping greed. O glory of the Kaurava race, men decline and decay, but greed never decays. Getting does not gratify greed,

13 Just as the ocean is never gratified by all the rivers pouring into it. The greed that getting does not gratify, the greed that kāma-lust does not quench,

14 The greed, O king, whose nature is not known even by gods, gandharvas, antigods, mahā-*uraga*-serpents, and by all of mankind, –

15 That greed can be conquered only by the person who has conquered his ātman and is lord of himself. Pride, hostility, slander, deviousness, inability to appreciate the success of others –

16 All these, O Kaurava, you will find in the man who has not conquered himself. Multi-learned scholars in the śāstras quote copiously from memory,

17 And clarify intellecutal subtleties, but become stupid victims of greed. Their character is corrupted by their hatred and their anger.

18 Sweet-talkers outside, poison-breeders inside, they are like stinking pits covered with green grass. They fly the flag of dharma and loot the people of this world.

19 Many are the paths of logic and reason they offer, but the path they travel is the path of destruction determined by their greed and un-reason.

20 When greed-gripped wicked-ātmaned men start twisting dharma to suit their purposes, that deformed dharma tends to become the accepted norm.

21 O Kaurava Yudhiṣṭhira! Greed apart, you will see in these men pride, anger, arrogance, euphoria and depression, insensitivity, over-weening self-importance.

22 Recognise these greed-gripped individuals as the uncultured ones. Let me now tell you about the cultured ones, the pure-hearted individuals.

23 They are not worried about success in this world, they do not fear the next world. They are not trapped in physical pleasures, in likeable and not-likeable things.

24 They appreciate civilised behaviour. They are firm in self-discipline. They are serene in pleasure and pain. Their supreme respect is for truth.

25 They give, they do not take. They are by nature compassionate. They honour their *pitṛs*, gods and guests. They are always helpfully active.

26 O descendant of Bharata! They are the real heroes, these dedicated devotees of all dharmas, always desiring the welfare of all.

27 You cannot persuade them to forsake dharma, because their primary concern is the upholding of dharma. This is the way civilised people behaved in the past, and it will never change.

28 They do not deceive, threaten or terrorise others. They keep to the straight path. They receive the service of the good and the noble. They practise ahiṁsā.

29 Seek their company and their advice, for they are without kāma-lust and anger, they have shed sentimentality and *ahaṁkāra* self-importance, they are strict-vowed upholders of lasting values.

30 They are not chasing wealth nor are they running after fame. Their concern, Yudhiṣṭhira, is with dharma. They accept the body for what it is.

31 Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira! Cherish them – these fear-less, anger-less, grief-less people who do not fly the flag of hypocritical dharma, these simple,

32 Straight folk who have gone beyond greed and delusion, the truly truthful ones, who are never destroyed, who always triumph – cherish them.

33 *Tāta*! Dear one! In loss and gain, in joy and sorrow, in pleasant and unpleasant, in life and death – they are the same, they are straight and steady, they are wide awake, they are firm in the is-ness of life, the sattva-path;

34 They are not ecstatic with success, nor dejected with failure, they are not sentimentally attached nor ego-inflated, they are firm in the is-ness of life, they see the duality of life with serene eyes.

35 How deep and dedicated is the love for dharma of these devotees! Such mahā-selflessness! Disciplining your senses, you should diligently give such noble people the reverence they deserve. They are born with good guṇas. We merely play babbling word-games of good and evil.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED FIFTY-NINE

1 "According to you, Pitāmaha," Yudhiṣṭhira said, "greed is at the heart of wastefulness and wickedness. What I would like to know, revered and dear grancestor, is the nature of ignorance."

2 Bhīṣma replied: Even the ignorant evil-doer creates his own doom. He despises men who have character, and he brings upon himself the displeasure of everyone.

3 Ignorance deposits him in hell, ignorance brings about his downfall, ignorance leads to calamity, ignorance creates grievous grief.

4 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "The origin of ignorance, its place, progress, decay, rise, root, yoga, course, time, cause, consequences –

5 All this, O earth-lord, is what I would like to know, because it is *ajñāna* not-knowing that creates all our miseries."

6 Bhīṣma replied: *Rāga*-attraction, aversion, delusion, euphoria, grief, *abhimān* self-importance, kāma, anger, pride, procrastination, idleness,

7 Desire, disgust, self-pity, pain at seeing the prosperity of others, wicked conduct – all these are products of ignorance.

8 Mahārāja! The questions you have asked about the origin and porgress of ignorance – let me answer them in precise detail.

9 O Bharata earth-lord! Greed and ignorance – consider them as identical. Their fruits are the same, their faults are the same.

10 Greed is the origin of ignorance. As ignorance grows, so greed grows. Where ignorance is, greed is. When greed declines, ignorance declines. Greed has a multiplicity of forms and ways and means.

11 Delusion is the root cause of greed. Delusion is inherent in the movement of Cosmic Time Kāla, and it is possible to slice and chop and destroy delusion slowly with the passage of time.

12 From one's ignorance comes greed, and from greed comes ignorance. All faults, all defects, all misdeeds are the result of greed. That is why at is so essential to discard greed.

13 Janaka, Yuvanāśva, Vṛṣādarbhi, Prasenajit, and many other lords of men succeeded in overcoming their greed and attained the realm of heaven.

14 O most excelling Kaurava! You too should try your utmost to get rid of greed which is present everywhere. By doing so, you will experience happiness in this world, and move on to happiness in the next world as well.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY

1 "Dharmātmā Pitāmaha," said Yudhiṣṭhira, "say a person is devoted to study of the Vedas and does deeds with desire for dharma – what is the highest ideal for such a person?

2 There is such a variety of darshans in this world about what is the ideal best. I would like to know what for you is ideal in this world and the next.

3 Mahā-embracing is the path of dharma, O Bharata, and many-branching. Which dharma is the ideal one to cherish and practise?

4 O rājā! *Tāta*! Dear and revered elder! This mahā-dharma – this multi-branching dharma – what is its fundamental root? I must know everything about it, and in every detail."

5 Bhīṣma replied: I will tell you how to achieve the ideal best. With the nectar of this deathless wisdom, it is possible for you to become wise.

6 There are any number of systems of dharma that have been recommended by mahā-ṛṣis. All of them give the same advice: self-control.

7 The wise elders of our past found their vision of truth in self-control. Specially for a Brahmin, the perfect ideal eternal Sanātana Dharma is self-control.

8 It is only self-control that fructifies ritual deeds. Self-control is superior to gift-giving, yajña-sacrifices, and chanting of the Vedas.

9 Self-control enhances *tejas*-personality, self-control is the supreme purifier. An evil-free person with such a personality experiences the Mahat-magnificence of the Reality of life itself.

10 We have not heard of any dharma in this world that is the equal of self-control. Self-control is praised by all dharma-knowers as the supreme dharma.

11 O Indra-among-men! Self-control is what brings supreme happiness. Mahā-dharma is acquired by the person who exercises restraint and discipline.

12 Happily he sleeps, the self-controlled man, and happily he wakes. Happily he moves about in society. He is the one whose mind is serene.

13 The man without self-control is plagued with troubles. He wallows in a mire of miseries of his own making.

14 The vow to practise self-control is the supreme pledge in all the four āśrama-stages of one's life. I will now mention the signs that indicate self-control.

15 *Kṣamā*-patience, fortitude, ahiṁsā, impartiality, truth, simplicity, conquest of the senses, skilfulness, gentleness, modesty, steadfastness,

16 Absence of pointless anger, contentment, soft-and-sweet-speaking, absence of acquisitiveness, unenviousness – these are signs of self-control.

17 O Kaurava! Pūjā-respect shown to gurus and elders, compassion for all living creatures, never speaking ill of others, never indulging in adulation and blame, are other signs.

18 A self-controlled man does not involve himself in kāma-lust, anger, greed, pride, arrogance, self-praise, contempt, jealousy, and vilification.

19 Never ridiculing others, free of kāma-lust, satisfied with little, never envious – such a man is like an ocean which absorbs all the waters, yet is never over-full.

20 "I am yours, and you are mine. They are mine, and I am theirs." These are not the sentiments of the self-controlled person regarding his relatives.

21 City-dweller or villager, he only is the free man who practises self-control and rises above praise and blame.

22 Mahā-fruitful is the after-life for the person of character who is friendly, serene-ātmaned, and aloof from worldly entanglements.

23 The man of character whose conduct is noble, who is serene-ātmaned, earns high respect in this life and happy passage to the next.

24 The learned muni treads the path of good karma in this world, which is the path chosen by the pious and the virtuous, and he never strays from that path.

25 The sense-disciplined, knowledge-guided person retires to the forest and calmly awaits the call of Kāla. Such a person is the ideal candidate for the experience of union with Brahman.

26 There is no fear after death for anyone who does not create fear in others in this life and who is not afraid of others either.

27 His store of past karma ends, and he gathers no more new karma. He looks on all creatures serenely, and treads the path of friendship.

28 It goes without saying that such a person lives through life and leaves no trace, like a bird in the sky and fish in water.

29 What wonderful radiant everlasting worlds there are, O rājā, for the person who leaves his home and devotes himself to mokṣa-liberation!

30 Renouncing karma, renouncing ritual practices, renouncing the vivid variety of academic learning, renouncing all this,

31 Purifying his kāma, and never looking back, that serene-ātmaned person gains deep respect in this life, and heaven in the next.

32 The realm of Brahmā Pitāmaha, the total experience of Brahman, is hidden in the cave of the heart, and can be attained only by self-control.

33 He does not fear rebirth in this world – the enlightened delighter in knowledge, who has no hostility for anyone – why should he fear the next world?

34 Self-control has only one fault, and none other. People mistake the self-controlled Buddha to be weak and unpractical, when he is actually patient and strong.

35 O supremely mahā-wise Yudhiṣṭhira! That one defect is a supreme mahā-guṇa, it is an advantage. Many magnificent desirable worlds open up to the patient self-controlled man.

36 What need is there for a self-controlled man to go to a forest, O Bharata? And how will a forest help an indisciplined man? Where a self-controlled man is, there is the āshram.

37 Hearing Bhīṣma's words (said Vaiśampāyana), rājā Yudhiṣṭhira rejoiced as if he had drunk *amṛta*-nectar.

38 O enhancer of Kaurava glory! He next asked about tapasyā, and finest-of-upholders-of-dharma Bhīṣma answered him in great detail.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-ONE

1 Bhīṣma said: O rājā, according to visionaries with poetic insight, the root cause of everything in this world is the creative heat of tapasyā. The fool who does not have tapasyā never gets the fruit of his *kriya*-deeds.

2 Prabhu Lord Prajāpati-Brahmā created the universe by tapasyā. Ṛṣis acquired the wisdom of the Vedas by the creative heat of their tapasyā.

3 Food of all kinds, fruits and roots are all produced by the creative heat of tapasyā. With intense singleminded concentration, perfected mortals are able to have a vision of the three worlds.

4 Medicines and other healing substances, and the varied techniques of healing are effective through tapasyā. Tapasyā is the root of sādhanā.

5 Tapasyā is the way to achieve whaever is hard to achieve. There is no denying that ṛṣis gained their supernatural powers by practising tapasyā.

6 With sincere tapasyā, a man can cleanse himself of the immorality of drunken-ness, taking things without the owner's permission, foeticide, and sleeping with his guru's wife.

7 Tapasyā is of many kinds, but the highest form of tapasyā is fasting, for both the active person and the detached from worldly matters.

8 Ahiṁsā, truth-speaking, charity, control of the senses are all part of tapasyā, but no tapasyā, mahārāja, is better than not eating.

9 Nothing is harder than charity. No conduct gives more security than serving one's mother. Nothing excels the three Vedas. Renunciation is the supreme tapasyā.

10 People practise sense-control because they cherish heaven and dharma. Indeed, to promote one's dharma and artha, no tapasyā is superior to fasting.

11 Ṛṣis, *pitṛs*, gods, human beings, birds and beasts, and all the other moving and unmoving life of the world

12 Are dependent on tapasyā. Tapasyā is the reason for they being what they are, their fulfilment lies in tapasyā. As for the gods, their mahā-presence also is the result of tapasyā.

13 The felicitous fruits
this world provides
come through tapasyā.
One can be sure
of attaining godliness
by practising tapasyā.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-TWO

1 "Pitamahā," said Yudhiṣṭhira, "Brahmins, ṛṣis, *pitṛs* and gods praise dharma as *satya*, the truth, the is-ness of existence. I would like to know what truth is. Please enlighten me.

2 What are the signs by which truth can be recognised, O rājā? How does one get to know truth? What happens after one gets to know truth? How? Tell me."

3 Bhīṣma replied: O descendant of Bharata! What cannot be praised is confusion about the dharmas of the four castes. Truth is that which transcends the limitations of caste.

4 For good and virtuous people truth is the only dharma. Truth is Sanātana Dharma. *Namaskāra* only truth; truth is the supreme fulfilment.

5 Truth is dharma, truth is tapasyā and yoga, truth is Sanātana Brahma, truth is said to be the ideal yajña. Whatever is, is because of truth.

6 Let me now tell you, in the proper order, the different manifestations of truth, and describe them as well.

7 Listen to me also how you can get to know truth. Among all the peoples of the world, truth is of thirteen kinds, O Bharata.

8 Truth itself, impartiality, self-control (no doubt of that), *amatsārya*-unselfishess, *kṣamā*-patience, modesty, forbearance, absence of envy,

9 Renunciation, *dhyāna*-meditation, ārya-dignity, undeviating purposefulness, and ahiṁsā – these, O Indra-among-rājās, are the signs of truth.

10 Truth is undecaying, always present, never changing. It is not antagonistic to any dharma. It can be experienced by practising yoga.

11 Impartiality means to perceive oneself and one's enemy as the same, what one likes and what one dislikes as the same. That perception comes when desire and disgust, kāma and anger, are overcome.

12 Self-control is not coveting others' possessions, being always positive-minded, patient, fear-free, calmly accepting affliction – all this comes from knowledge.

13 The wise say unselfishness means not to practise self-seeking charity and dharma. You become unselfish by assiduously abiding by truth.

14 As for patience and impatience, patience is when likes and dislikes are equally perceived. The truth-speaker, the good person, achieves that great good.

15 Modesty is when a man wisely seeks the welfare of others and does not boast about it. He is always soft-speaking. Modesty comes when dharma is practised.

16 Forbearance is the quality that absorbs hardships for the sake of dharma-and-artha. It sets a fine example to mankind. Fortitude produces forbearance.

17 Renunciation of yearning for things is the real form of renunciation. Only overcoming desire and disgust leads to renunciation – nothing else.

18 Ārya-dignity is when one's karma is directed to doing good to the world's creatures. It has to be done artlessly and dispassionately.

19 Undeviating purposefulness means never giving up one's ideal in painful times or happy times. Anyone wise enough to know what success is, will make use of such purposefulness.

20 It is essential for a human being to be patient and to be dedicated to truth. Only that man is a learned paṇḍit whose purposefulness is the product of discarding euphoria, fear and anger.

21 The Sanātana Dharma of those who are truly rooted in the meaning of life is reflected in their never harming anyone in thought, word and karma; in lovingkindness and gift-giving.

22 These are the thirteen different aspects and manifestations of truth, which is always one and indivisible. O descendant of Bharata! They draw their sustenance from truth, and they add to the greater glory of truth.

23 There is no dharma that is greater than truth. There is no degradation greater than untruth. The sole foundation of dharma is truth. Never demean or destroy truth.

24 Truth is at the heart of gift-giving, from truth come yajña-sacrifice and *dakṣiṇā*-charity, truth determines the value of the triple sacred *agnihotṛ*-fires, and all the other activities that are dictated by dharma.

25 Place one thousand *aśvamedha* horse-sacrifices at one end of the scale, and truth at the other end – and the balance will tilt in favour of truth.

26 O lord of the earth! There is no end to the guṇas of truth, which is why Brahmins and *pitṛs* and gods sing the praises of truth.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-THREE

1 "O bull-brave Bharata," said Yudhiṣṭhira, "where do anger and kāma come from, and grief and delusion, and over-critical curiosity, and desire to harm others, and pride,

2 And greed and envy and jealousy and contempt and resentment and, O mahā-wise one, pity. I would like to know about all this in detail."

3 Bhīṣma replied: Mahāraja, according to *smṛti*-tradition, these thirteen haunt human beings, and are a man's most dangerous enemies.

4 They are always on the alert. The instant they are given a chance by a careless person, they pounce on him like wolves and tear him apart.

5 O bull-brave hero! It is important for a human being to always remind himself: "From these comes misery, from these comes evil."

6 O lord of the earth! How they are born, how they take hold, and how they can be detroyed – this I will now explain. Anger is born,

7 O ruler of the earth, – listen to me with single-minded attention – out of greed. It is fuelled by always finding fault with others;

8 It is kept at bay by patience, O rājā, and it is overcome by supreme tolerance. Kāma-lust is born of *saṁkalpa*-fantasising; the more one indulges in it, the more it flourishes.

9 It ends the moment a wise man decides against it. Chronic anger and greed are responsible for the harm done to others;

10 They are overcome by cultivating fellow-feeling for all life, and by a sense of detachment. They end when wisdom reveals this basic truth.

11 Delusion is born of ignorance. It flourishes on evil deeds. Delight in wisdom destroys delusion.

12 On enhancer of Kaurava glory! Over-critical curiosity sees contradictions in the sacred *śāstra*-texts. This ends only when one goes to *tattva-jñāna*, the fundamental truth.

13 Grief is the result of a person's separation from what he or she loves. It ends the instant you realise it is silly and useless.

14 Chronic anger and grief are responsible for the harm done to others. They are overcome by cultivating fellow-feeling for all life.

15 Rejection of truth and consorting with ill-wishers create a feeling of contempt. *Tāta*, dear one, mixing with the good and noble kills contempt.

16 Family, knowledge and power are the roots of pride. See them as they really are, and pride disappears.

17 Selfish kāma-desire is what leads to jealousy. It feeds on the happiness and prosperity of others. When one realises the truth of this, it disappears.

18 Contempt grows when one observes the crude behaviour of the low class and uncultured. It disappears, O rājā, when one shuns their company.

19 Bitter resentment is the result of the condescending attitude of a powerful person. Cultivate a little compassion, and it goes away.

20 Pity is born when you constantly look down on the helpless and pitiable. Be firm in the strength of your dharma, and overcome enfeebling pity.

21 Look carefully, and you will see that ignorance is the source of all human greed. See the transitoriness of pleasure, and greed disappears.

22 Only when you have peace of mind will these thirteen be overcome. Dhṛtarāṣṭra's sons had all these thirteen faults. You are firm in truth, you respect your elders, you have conquered all thirteen.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FOUR

1 "O Bharata descendant!" said Yudhiṣṭhira. "I see good people and learn from them the virtue of not harming others. But I cannot understand those who believe in doing harm to others.

2 People stay away from such cruel and harmful types, avoiding them as they avoid thorns, and pits, and fire.

3 A man who harms others, Bharata, burns in this world and in the next as well. Tell me, Kaurava, what kind of dharma is his?"

4 Bhīṣma replied: His nature is that way. His karma shows him for what he is. He maligns others, and as a result gets maligned by others.

5 He is lucky to get whatever is given to him. He is mean, he is a liar, he is a thug. Never happy with others, conceited, consorting with the cunning and the crooked,

6 Always suspecting everyone, petty, stingy, boasting of the company he keeps, creating rifts and misunderstandings in āshrams,

7 Sadistically violent, unable to tell the difference between *guṇa* and *aguṇa*, virtue and vice, pompous, greedy – such is he.

8 To him, it is the man who follows dharma who is evil. He thinks everyone is like him, so he trusts no one.

9 He is free with the faults of others, but the same faults in himself he conceals, because he knows very well what's good for him.

10 He considers anyone who helps him as a gullible simpleton. If he helps anyone with money, even a man who once helped him, he regrets giving such assistance.

11 Consider that man as capable of harming others who happily gobbles delicious food, soft and chewy and lickable, all by himself, while others look at him expectantly.

12 On the other hand, he who enjoys a meal with his friends, after offering a portion first to Brahmins, gets not only the joy of this world but also of heaven.

13 O best of the Bharatas! I have delineated before you the signs of the cruel and harmful man. If you wish to prosper, stay away from such people.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-FIVE

1 Bhīṣma continued: Say someone supremely proficient in the Vedas is about to perform his yajña, or one who wishes to honour his ācārya or revere his *pitṛ*-ancestors or wishes to marry or proceed with a *svādhyāya* self-study of the Vedas –

2 Say, such a Brahmin, a good man who in the eyes of people is a dharma-beggar, is found to be without any means of subsistence – his needs, O Bharata, of wealth and knowledge should be met.

3 O finest of the Bharatas! Other Brahmins should be given *dakṣiṇā*-gifts. Still others should be given uncooked food, at a distance from the *vedi*-altar.

4 A rājā may gift jewels to deserving Brahmins. Brahmins are the multi-*dakṣiṇā-ed* Vedas personified, and are always busy competing for yajña-excellence.

5 A person who has sufficient food supply to last his family for three years or more is justified to drink soma-juice at a lavish yajña.

6 Say, for any reason a yajña remains uncompleted, specially a Brahmin's yajña – in that case it is the duty of a dharma-dedicated rājā

7 To appropriate whatever is needed from the wealth of a Vaiśya householder who owns many cattle, provided the Vaiśya is not himself performing a yajña or drinking soma.

8 From a Śūdra's house, however, he may take as much as he likes, because a Śūdra has no authority to perform any yajña.

9 Without any hesitation, he can take from the owner of a hundred cows who has not lit the *agnihotṛ*-fire, or from a non-yajña-performing 1000-cow owner.

10 A rājā is acting perfectly in accord with dharma if he appropriates the wealth of an affluent subject who gives nothing in charity – but he must make public announcement of this.

11 Listen to this: A Brahmin who has not eaten six meals, who has starved for three full days, is permitted to take his seventh meal from the house of a non-yajña-performer – but nothing more than that.

12 He may take this seventh meal from the granary, field, garden or anywhere, with or without the king's knowledge, but he must inform the king of what he has done.

13 Dharma dictates that a rājā who knows dharma will not punish this man. After all, it is the carelessness of the Kṣatriya that leads to the starvation of the Brahmin.

14 After checking on the Brahmin's learning and character, the king should provide for him as a father provides for his legitimate sons.

15 At the close of each year, he should perform the Vaiśvānara *iṣṭi*-sacrifice. This is an alternative ritual, but those who know dharma have declared that such a substitute is permitted by dharma.

16 Fearing death in times of dire distress, Viśvadevas, Sādhyas, Brahmins and other mahā-ṛṣis did not hesitate to be flexible in this matter.

17 But ill-minded is the man who has the means to perform the main but prefers to perform the substitute ritual; he gets no fruits for such a deed.

18 No Veda-wise Brahmin should go around supplicating before a rājā. The valour of a rājā is one thing, the power of a Brahmin is different and superior.

19 No rājā can withstand the radiant energy of a Brahman-knowing Brahmin. Creator, ordainer, preserver, a *deva*-deity is a Brahmin – so they say.

20 Nothing inauspicious, nothing bitter is to b said to a Brahmin. They overcome crisis and calamity – a Ksatriya by sheer physical strength,

21 A Vaiśya and a Śūdra by the power of money, and a Brahmin by mantras and *homas.* An 8-year-old *kanyā*-virgin, a 14 year-old *yuvati*-virgin, a mantra-ignorant man, a childish adult,

22 And a *saṁskāra*-less uninitiated person are not entitled to perform the *agnihotṛ*. They fall into hell if they do. Only a learned-in-the-Vedas man is competent for this ritual. Hell also awaits the man for whom it is performed.

23 Those with dharma-darshan declare null and void the ritual that does not give as *dakṣiṇā* the Prajāpati-dedicated horse.

24 A man who has controlled his senses can do pure and meritorious deeds, but no yajña can be performed without the giving away of *dakṣiṇā*-offerings.

25 A *dakṣiṇā*-less yajña ruins one's family, cattle, and chances of attaining heaven; it harms one's senses, fame, glory, and one's very life.

26 Classify as perpetrators of criminal karma all Brahmins who sleep with a woman in her period, who perform no *homas*, and are ignorant of sacred rituals.

27 Consider that Brahmin a Śūdra who marries a Śūdra girl and lives for twelve years in a village which gets its water from a single well. His karma makes him a Śūdra.

28 A Brahmin who commits adultery, and exalts a Śūdra or non-Brahmin who commits adultery, and exalts a Śūdra or non-Brahmin and demeans himself at their feet, loses his Brahminhood. But he can be purified, O rājā.

29 The crime of a Brahmin who waits upon a lower caste or consorts with a lower caste for a single night can be cleansed if he takes a three-year vow to travel on his daily rounds.

30 Not considered as wrong are five kinds of lies; O rājā: A lie that is a joke, a lie to a woman, a lie at the time of marriage, a lie for the welfare of one's guru, a lie to save life.

31 Even from a lowclass person one can get high class wisdom. Gold is gold, no matter how filthy the place where one finds it. That goes without saying.

32 There are gems of girls in the worst of families. You get medicinal nectar from snake-venom. Women, diamond, and rain-water – these three are always pure. Dharma says so.

33 For the protection of cows and Brahmins, when caste distinctions get confused, even a Vaiśya can take the help of weapons, or to save himself.

34 Drinking liquor, Brahmin-murder, sleeping with a guru's wife are crimes that cannot be expiated. It is held that they can be expiated only by ending one's life.

35 A grave moral fall is theft of gold belonging to a Brahmin. Drinking liquor and living a life of sexual debauchery

36 And, mahārāja, consorting with fallen Brahmins, and lusting for Brahmin women makes a person equally degraded.

37 Mixing with a fallen person, performing his yajñas, teaching him, marrying into his family makes him fall in a year; instantly, on eating or sitting with him.

38 O Bharata descendant! Apart from these grave moral falls, are others that can be expiated, and one can be completely freed of taint.

39 Even if the *preta*-karma funeral rites have not been performed for the first three – liquor-drinkers, Brahmin-murderers, guru-wife-violators – there is no restriction on taking any special food or laying claim to property.

40 Dharma requires that a man of dharma should be scrupulous. He should cut off relations with friends and guru-elders if they behave immorally. Until such time as they have expiated their crimes, he should refuse even to talk to them.

41 A man of adharma can return to dharma by wiping out his crime through tapasyā. To shout "Thief!" at a thief is to become a thief oneself.

42 But to shout "Thief!" at someone who is not a thief, is to be a double-thief oneself. A sexually-consenting virgin gets three-fourths the taint of Brahmin-murder,

43 And the man who deflowers her gets one-fourth. Very serious are the consequences for those who revile and harm Brahmins.

44 They wander lost for a hundred years. Then, for a thousand years they have to suffer the torments of hell.

45 In other words, never revile a Brahmin, never harm one. As many particles of dust as it takes to soak the blood of a hurt Brahmin –

46 For so many years, O rājā, does the culprit have to suffer in hell. A killer of a foetus is absolved if he dies of wounds on a battlefield,

47 Or if he jumps into a fire and sacrifices his life. A man who drinks liquor can cleanse himself by gulping down flaming hot *vāruṇi*-liquor.

48 That liquor sears his body, and he dies; and his death is his cleansing. There is in fact no other way that a Brahmin can attain heaven.

49 An evil-thinking, wicked-ātmaned man who commits adultery with his guru's wife can be cleansed if he dies after embracing a red-hot flaming iron statue of a woman.

50 Alternatively, he should cut off his penis and his testicles and offer them, in *añjali*-folded palms,

51 To Nirṛti in the south-west, walking there in a straight line till he drops dead. Or he can cleanse himself by giving up his *prāṇa*-life-breath for the sake of a Brahmin.

52 Or he can get cleansed in this world and the next by offering pūjā at an Aśvamedha, a Goseva cow-sacrifice, or an Agniṣṭoma.

53 A Brahmin-murderer may live as a *brahmacāri* for twelve years, carrying a skull, and proclaiming his crime, begging for alms;

54 Practising this tapasyā, he should bathe at dawn, noon and evening, and expiate his crime. A criminal who kills a pregnant *ātreyi*-woman.

55 Knowing she is pregnant, gets double the taint of a Brahmin-killer. A liquor-drinker should eat frugally, practise brahmacarya, sleep on the bare ground

56 For three years, and then perform the Agniṣṭoma, and finally purify himself by giving away one thousand bulls or the same number of cows.

57 A Vaiśya-killer expiates by living thus for two years and giving away a hundred bulls or a hundred cows. A Śūdra-killer lives thus for one year, and gives away one bull and a hundred cows.

58 Who kills a dog, boar or donkey must expiate in the same way as a Śūdra-killer. Cat, *cāṣa* blue jay, frog, crow, snake, mouse –

59 A killer of any of these, O rājā, gets the taint that is associated with animal-slaughter. Let me now come to other kinds of expiation.

60 For minor transgressions, a year of penance is sufficient purification. For sleeping with a wise-in-*śruti* Brahmin wife, three years' penance;

61 Two years for any other adultery. For defiling the sacred fire, eating frugally, brahmacarya, subsisting three days on water, standing by day and sitting at night . . .

62 O Kaurava! Destitute of dharma is anyone who deserts father, mother, or guru – unless there is good reason to do so.

63 Such a person should be given only subsistence food and basic clothing. Practising brahmacarya, serving Brahmins, such a person is absolved.

64 The same expiation suffices for a woman caught in an act of adultery as is advised for a man who sleeps with others' wives.

65 Ordered by the rājā to be devoured by dogs in a public place is the woman who deserts a superior man and cohabits with an inferior.

66 A wise ruler will order a man who commits adultery to be tied to a bed made of iron which has been heated by burning logs under it to consume the guilty man.

67 The same punishment, mahārāja, is to be meted out to wives who betray their husbands similarly. A crime not expiated for an entire year gets double its original punishment.

68 A person who mixes with criminals for two, three, four or five years must live as a *muni* and subsist on alms for as many years in expiation.

69 If a younger brother marries first, the elder brother, the younger brother and the younger brother's wife are all to blame, according to dharma.

70 All must expiate in the way a *vīrahā*-killer expiates, by the *candrāyaṇa* fast for a month, or any other rigorous and painful penance.

71 The younger brother should offer his bride to his unmarried elder brother who, following dharma, will return her to the younger brother, thus freeing all three.

72 If one has sex with animals – so long as it is not a cow – no blame attaches if ejaculation does not take place, because man is the lord of the animal world, protector and consumer of creatures.

73 But he should wave the fan of cowtail hair and carry an earthen bowl and proclaim his deed before seven houses,

74 And eat whatever food he receives by begging thus. Twelve days' expiation suffices. A worse offence entails an entire year of expiation.

75 For sex with men, this expiation is the best. For those who have the resources, charity is a form of expiation. Tradition says so.

76 Those who are not negative thinking *nāstikas* are cleansed by giving away just one cow. Dog, boar, human, cock, donkey –

77 Anyone eating their flesh, or imbibing urine or dung, must have his initiation-*saṁskāra* performed again, and so get purified. If a soma-drinking Brahmin gets even the smell of a liquor-drinking

78 Brahmin, he should drink warm water or warm milk for three days; then, living on plain air for three days, he will complete his expiation.

79 These are the eternal verities of expiation, meant specially for Brahmins who commit crimes knowingly or unwittingly.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SIX

1 After the end of this discourse, Nakula apprached Bhīṣma lying on his bed of arrows. That absolutely expert swordsman said to the Pitāmaha : (continued Vaiśampāyana)

2 "O wise-in-dharma Pitāmaha! Everybody speaks of the bow as the best of war-weapons. In my opinion, however, the finest war-weapon is a finely sharpened sword.

3 When a bow is splintered, O rājā, when one's horses are killed, one can always defend oneself with a sword.

4 A single warrior with a sword can take on adversaries armed with bows, maces and *śakti*-spears.

5 This is what puzzles me, O lord of the earth. And makes me curious too. I wonder which weapon is the best weapon.

6 O grancestor Pra-pitāmaha! What is the origin of the sword? Who crafted it? And why? Who was the very first sword-*ācārya*? All this I would like to know."

7 Vaiśampāyana continued: Mādrī's intelligent son Nakula's words were well-reasoned, stable, and meaningful. Having listened to them,

8 O Bharata Janamejaya, to the words of the excellent disciple of Droṇa, in sweetly enunciated sentences,

9 Wise-in-dharma and unparalleled master of the science of bowcraft Bhīṣma replied from his bed of arrows to mahā-ātmaned Nakula:

10 Madreya-Nakula, listen to the truth of this matter. I have been lying incert like a red-mineral-streaked hill – your question has re-enthused me.

11 Tāta, dear one, in the very distant past, all was an endless expanse of water – no sky visible, no earth, no movement, nothing stirring . . .

12 All was darkness, impalpable, inaudible, immeasurable, a darshan of profound and perfect imperceptibility. In that state of supreme sound-lessness materialised the Pitāmaha of the cosmos,

13 The Virile One who created wind, and fire, and the sun. And he created sky above, and the Nirṛti realms of the underworld below,

14 And the moon and the stars and the planets in the sky, and the years and the seasons and the months and the *pakṣas* and *lava*-instants and *kṣaṇa*-moments.

15 Then the Pitāmaha swaddled the cosmos with his presence, after which Bhagavān Brahmā fathered infinitely radiant sons:

16 The ṛṣis Marīci, Atri, Pulastya, Pulaha, Kratu, Vasiṣṭha and Aṅgiras, *prabhu*-lord and *īśvara*-lord Rudra-Śiva.

17 Prācetasa-Dakṣa fathered sixty daughters. These sixty daughters of Dakṣa were all taken by Brahma-ṛṣis to engender the multitudinosity of all created life.

18 From them was born the multiplicity of creatures: gods, *pitra*-ancestors, gandharvas, apsarās, the various rākṣasas,

19 Birds, small animals, fish, monkeys, *uraga*-mahā-serpents, and the teeming variety of land and water life,

20 Moving and unmoving, egg-born, womb-born, sweat-born, plant-born. *Tāta*, dear one, this was the way everything took birth.

21 Grandfather-of-the cosmos Sarva-loka-pitāmaha created this multitudinosity, and established for its stability the everlasting dharma that is transmitted by studying the Vedas.

22 Stable and steady in this dharma are the gods, *ācāryas*, purohitas, Ādityas, Vasus, Rudras, Sādhyas, Maruts, and Aśvins.

23 Bhṛgu, Atri, Aṅgiras, the Siddhas, rich-in-tapasyā Kāśyapa, Vasiṣṭha, Gautama, Agastya, Nārada and Parvata,

24 The ṛṣis, the Vālakhilyas, the Prabhasas, the Sikatas, Ghṛtapas, Somapas, Vaiśavānaras and Marīcapas,

25 Akṛṣṭas, Haṁsas, the ṛṣis born from Agni-yoni, the Vanāprasthas and Pṛśnis – all these were stable under the rule of Brahmā.

26 But the Indra-like Dānavas disobeyed Pitāmaha Brahmā. Motivated by anger and greed, they violated and diminished dharma.

27 Hiraṇyakaṣipu, Hiraṇyākṣa, Virocana, Śambara, Vipracitti, Virādha, Namuci, and Bali –

28 These and other hordes of Daityas and Dānavas breached the bridge of dharma and exulted in indulgence in adharma.

29 All of them thought: "We have the same ancestor: we and the gods are the same." So, bolstered by this dharma, they challenged the god-like *sura*-ṛṣis.

30 They had no feelings for other creatures, no compassion, O Bharata descendant. Rejecting the three popular means of persuasion – conciliation, discipline and dissension – they preferred afflicting people with the rod of punishment.

31 All these excellent antigods, puffed with pride, refused to have any amicable relations with people. And so it happened that the Brahmā-ṛṣis, led by Bhagavān Brahmā,

32 Went to the enchanting Himālayan peak which glittered with trillions of stars like a lake lovely with lotuses – a hundred-*yojana*-circumferenced gem-and-jewelled mountain.

33 My son! On that most marvellous of mountains, overflowing with flowers and fruits, the finest deity Brahmā stayed to complete his mission of ensuring the welfare of the worlds.

34 A thousand years passed. Then *prabhu*-lord Brahmā arranged, for the commencement there in accordance with the traditional rites laid down in the Kalpa-sūtras

35 Of yajña – a yajña made glorious by the presence of karma-competent ṛṣis, and glowing with the splendour of sacrificial fuel feeding the sacred fires.

36 Everywhere was an abundance of golden plates and vessels for use in the yajña, and hosts of gods thronged the yajña-maṇḍala,

37 Whose splendour was enhanced by Sadasyas and Brahma-ṛṣis. It was there that this horrifying incident happened, which I heard from the ṛṣis themselves.

38 What I heard was: some thing shot out of that sacred fire, scattering the sparks, like the moon, as it were, bursting into a sprinkle of stars on a clear night.

39 That thing had a skin as dark as a dark-blue lotus. A pinched stomach; sharp teeth; very tall; fearful-looking; illimitably energetic, it seemed.

40 The instant it materialised, the earth trembled. The mahā-ocean swelled with mahā-billows and whirlpools.

41 Meteors fell from the sky with massive impacts. Trees shed their leafy branches. The four quarters became confused. Everywhere was a blowing of inauspicious winds.

42 Fear gripped all the world's creatures. Seeing the tumultuous ubiquitous terror, created by the emanated being,

43 Pitāmaha Brahma said to the mahā-ṛṣis, gods and gandharvas: "This virile creature was Asi, the Sword, my mind-born creation,

44 Imaginated by me for the protection of the world and the annihilation of the enemies of the gods. This creature rejected that form, and assumed the shape of a thirty-finger-long,

45 Gleaming, sharp-bladed sword, as fierce as Kāla-Antaka Doomsday." With these words, to blue-throated, bull-bannered Rudra-Śiva

46 Was the keen-edged sword given by Brahma for the sake of combating the forces of adharma. Extolled by the mahā-ṛṣis, Bhagavān Rudra-Śiva,

47 The infinite-ātmaned deity, picked up the sword and assumed another form, a four-armed shape that stood erect on the earth with his head touching the day-making sun.

48 Mahā-linga-Śiva, erect, gazed upwards. Flames issued from his mouth, and his body blazed now blue, now white, now red.

49 He wore a dress of black deerskin embroidered with golden stars. In the centre of his forehead was a third eye as dazzling as the sun.

50 His two other eyes glittered – one black, the other brown. Śūla-pāṇi trident-carrying destroyer-of-the-eyes-of-Bhaga Bhagākṣihā Mahādeva Deva-Śiva

51 Brandished that *nistriṁśa*-sword that flashed with the brilliance of the doomsday Kālāgni-fire, and wielding a triple-embossed shield which resembled a dark lightning-streaked rain-cloud, the mahā-powerful deity began whirling around with the weapon in a series of swift manoeuvres,

52 Slicing the sky, it seemed, ready for mortal combat. Raucous was his mahā-laughter, horrendous his roars,

53 O Bharata, in the fearful shape assumed by Rudra-Śiva. That shape of Rudra-Śiva, assumed by him for the perpetration of gruesome deeds, –

54 When the Dānavas saw him in that shape, they attacked him in a body, confident they would succeed. They pelted him with stones, with blazing faggots, and grisly weapons,

55 Sharp-spiked weapons fashioned of iron. When the Dānava hordes realised that invulnerable and unretreating

56 Powerful Rudra-Śiva was in no way affected, they became confused. So agile with his sword was he, he fought with such dexterity,

57 Though he was only one, the antigods thought there were a thousand of him battling with them. Slicing and chopping, and crushing and lopping,

58 He swept through them like a forest-fire through dry grass and sticks. The swish of the Sword shredded the arms, thighs, and chests

59 Of the mahā-powerful antigods, and their multilated bodies littered the earth. Devastated by the Sword, other Dānavas

60 Fled in all directions. Some took cover underground, others hid in mountain caves;

61 Still others soared to the safety of the sky, or slipped inside the depths of the ocean. That brutal battle, the instant it commenced,

62 Filled the earth with a welter of blood, flesh and marrow – the remains of the bodies of dead Dānavas fell on the field.

63 The earth looked as if littered with toppled peaks of mountains draped with a forest of flaming *kiṁśuka* trees.

64 The blood-drenched earth looked at that time like a drunken woman, in a blood-dripping dress.

65 After annihilating the Dānavas and re-establishing dharma, *śiva*-auspicious Rudra-Śiva discarded his *rudra*-form and assumed his benign appearance. Then, all the mahā-ṛṣis and the hosts of gods

66 Extolled the victorious Devadeva God-of-gods Śiva and worshipped him. Bhagavān Rudra-Śiva took the dripping-with-Dānava-blood

67 Sword and, for the sake of preserving dharma, he offered it to Viṣṇu. Bhagavān Viṣṇu passed it on to Marīci, and Marīci passed it on

68 To the mahā-ṛṣis, and the mahā-ṛṣis passed it on to Vāsava-Indra. Mahendra-Indra passed it on to the Lokapāla world-guardians, and the Lokapālas, my son,

69 Passed the gigantic Sword to Manu, the son of Savitā the Sun. They said to Manu: "You are the *īśvara*-lord of mankind.

70 Cherish and protect all creatures with this Sword which is the very womb of dharma. All who violate the gross and finer senses of the body by overstepping the limits of dharma

71 Are to be appropriately punished, because dharma has to be protected. They are to be punished deservedly not arbitrarily. Rebuke is one kind of punishment, payment in gold of a fine is another;

72 Cutting off a limb is another, as is execution. The last two should never be imposed for minor offences. All these – starting with verbal censure – are to be treated as forms of Sword-punishment, and all should be informed about them.

73 Proof is essential before punishment by the Sword is ordered." Saying this, the Lokapālas left their people-protecting son Manu.

74 To preserve the welfare of all people, Manu passed the Sword on to his son Kṣapa. From Kṣapa it went to Ikṣvāku, and from Ikṣvāku to Pururavas.

75 From Purūravas it went to Āyu, and from Āyu to Nahuṣa; from Nahuṣa to Yayāti, and from Yayāti to Pūrū.

76 From Pūrū it went to Amūrtarayā, from Amūrtarayā to king Bhūmiśaya. From Bhūmiśaya it went to Duśyanta's son Bharata.

77 From Bharata, O rājā, it went to wise-in-dharma Ailavila, and from Ailavila to lord-of-men Dhundhumāra;

78 From Dhundhumāra to Kāmboja, then to Mucukunda; from Mucukunda to Marutta, from Marutta to Raivata;

79 From Raivata to Yuvanāśva, from Yuvanāśva to Raghu of the Ikṣvāku dynasty, from Raghu to illustrious Harināśva;

80 Harināśva to Sunaka, from Śunaka to dharmātmā Uśīnara, from Uśīnara to Bhoja of the Yādavas;

81 From the Yādavas to Śibi, from Śibi to Pratardana, from Pratardana to Aṣṭaka, from Aṣṭaka to Pṛṣada;

82 From Pṛṣada to Bharadvāja's son Droṇa, from Droṇa to Kṛpa. You and your brothers are the recipients from Kṛpa of this primary absolute Sword.

83 The Kṛttikās are the constellation under which this Sword was born. Agni is its presiding deity, Rohiṇī its *gotra*, and Rudra-Śiva its supreme guru.

84 This Sword has eight secret names, O son of Pāṇḍu. Listen to them. Whoever recites these names is always victorious on the battlefield.

85 Asi: knife
Viśasan: slicer
Khaṅga: sword
Tikṣṇadhāra: sharp-edged
Durāsada: invulnerable
Śrīgarbha: Womb of prosperity
Vijaya: Victory
Dharmapāla: protector-of-dharma.

86 Son of Mādravatī! Maheśvara-Śiva produced this finest of swords, the primary weapon. The Purāṇas declare this with absolute certainty. All these eight names are recorded in the Purāṇas.

87 O foe-chastiser! So far as the bow is concerned, it was created by Pṛthu. It was with this bow that Vena's son created the prosperity of *pṛthivī*, our earth, with its bountiful harvests; with it he spread the rule of dharma.

88 O son of Mādrī! You should accept the wisdom of the ṛṣis as self-evident. All who are skilled in the tactics of warfare should pūjā-respect this Sword.

89 O bull-brave Bharata! I have answered in detail your question about the origin of the Sword and its relevance.

90 A man who listens to this account of the supreme and absolute Sword gains fame in this world and *ananta*-endlessness after the dies.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-SEVEN

1 Bhīṣma paused (continued Vaiśampāyana) and lapsed into silence. Yudhiṣṭhira went back, met with his brothers and, with Vidura the fifth in the group, he said:

2 "The world revolves around dharma, artha and kāma. Which comes first? Which second? Which is the least important?

3 To overcome the triple defects – kāma-krodha-lobha lust-anger-greed – which should one concentrate most upon – dharma, artha or kāma? I would like a confident and positive answer from all of you."

4 Because he knew the ins and outs of artha, and because he had an impressive personality, Vidura replied, keeping in mind the values of the dharma-śāstras:

5 "The wealth of the ātman lies in studying the numerous *śrutis*, tapasyā, giving up things, *śraddhā*, performance of yajñas and other sacrifices, fortitude, purity of thinking, compassion, truth, and self-discipline.

6 Practise these, and free your mind from fickle agitations. They are the roots of dharma and artha. This, in my opinion, is the single most important step that you must take.

7 The ṛṣis crossed the oceanic world with dharma. Dharma is the solid foundation of the universe. Dharma is what energises the gods. Dharma is at the very heart of artha.

8 O rājā! Dharma is the supreme guṇa. Artha stands in the middle – so they say. According to the clear-thinking, kāma is the least of the three.

9 Which is why one should discipline one's ātman and focus on dharma as the most important. One should do to all creatures as one does to one's own ātman."

10 Vidura paused. With Yudhiṣṭhira's permission (continued Vaiśampāyana), brilliant-in-the-intricacies-of-artha-śāstra and wise-in-the-truths-of-dharma-and-artha Pārtha-Arjuna asked:

11 "O rājā! This world is a karma-*bhūmi*. This world praises action. Agriculture, commerce, cattle-rearing, arts and crafts of all kinds –

12 All of them aim at artha – material prosperity. There is no karma that does not lead to artha. The śruti-scriptures declare that you cannot get dharma and kāma without artha.

13 A man who has artha is in a better position to cultivate dharma, and even a man with a less developed ātman is better able to pursue kāma if he has artha.

14 According to śruti, dharma and kāma are the two arms of artha. If you have artha, you can practise dharma and kāma.

15 People who are born in superior yonīs always honour the man who has artha, just as all creatures worship Brahmā.

16 Artha is sought after by everyone – even by those with matted hair, those who dress in *ajina*-deerskin, those who control their senses, those who smear mud on their bodies, those with shaven heads, those who have no children, and those who live in isolation from society.

17 The ochre-robed, the bearded, the modest and unimposing, the serene, the detached from worldly possessions, the learned,

18 And still others – whose aim is to gain heaven, and who pursue their family traditions, or practise non-conformist ideals of their own making – all of them have their eyes on artha.

19 *Āstika* positive thinkers and *nāstika* negative thinkers devote themselves to severe self-discipline, but they also pursue artha. Not to realise the importance of artha is the darkest ignorance, to realise its importance is of knowledge the most illuminating.

20 The man with artha is he whose servants enjoy a comfortable life and whose enemies are punished and subjugated. O finest of clear thinkers! That, at least, is my opinion. But you should now listen to what these two brothers are eager to say."

21 Vaiśampāyana continued: Skilled in dharma-and-artha, the twin brothers Nakula and Sahadeva, Mādrī's sons, said:

22 "Sitting, lying in bed, moving about, everyone should make every effort to gather artha.

23 Artha is desirable and hard to acquire; but once it is acquired, it goes without saying that it helps in the fulfilment of one's kāma.

24 Both of us are convinced that dharma that leads to artha, and artha that leads to dharma, will give you the taste of *amṛta*-nectar.

25 A man without artha will never find his kāma gratified, and a man without dharma will never know the meaning of artha. The man who is without dharma and artha is feared by people.

26 Which is why a person should discipline his ātman and acknowledge the importance of dharma in the pursuit of artha. Such a person is trusted by people, and it is trust that brings success to a person.

27 Therefore, gather dharma first. Then, with the help of dharma, gather artha. Then, gratify kāma. In this way is true success achieved."

28 Vaiśampāyana continued: The twin sons of the Aśvins stopped speaking. Now it was the turn of Bhīmasena to have his say.

29 "If you have no kāma, why would you like to cultivate dharma? Why try to acquire artha? The man without kāma has no desire for kāma either. That is why kāma is all important.

30 Even the ṛṣis are moved by kāma in their efforts at tapasyā. They subsist on roots, shoots, and fruits. They feed on air to continue their self-discipline.

31 So do those who study the Vedas and Upavedas and become expert scholars. *Śraddhā*, and *yajña*, and *kriyā* and other rituals are all motivated by kāma.

32 Traders, farmers, cattle-herders, artists, craftsmen and performers of rituals to the gods are all involved in karma that is motivated by kāma.

33 Kāma motivates people to plumb the depths of the ocean. Kāma takes a multiplicity of forms. Everything is pervaded by kāma.

34 Nothing is, nothing was, and nothing will be that is not motivated by kāma. The essence of everything is kāma, mahārāja; dharma and artha depend on kāma.

35 What butter is to curd, kāma is to dharma and artha. Sesame oil is better than crushed seasame seeds. Fruits and flowers are better than wood. Kāma is better than dharma and artha.

36 Honey-rasa is extracted from flowers; similarly, the yoni of dharma and artha provides the exquisite delight of kāma. Kāma is the ātman of dharma and artha.

37 It is kāma that makes a Brahmin relish good food. It is kāma that makes people give gifts to Brahmins. All the vivid variety of the world's happenings take place because of kāma. That is why kāma is the best of the triple *tri-varga* ideal.

38 And so, O rājā, surround yourself with lovely, excellently ornamented and deliciously intoxicated girls, and delight yourself with them. Kāma should be our supreme indulgence.

39 O son of Dharma! I have given the deepest thought to this matter, and this is my recommendation. You should not ignore it. My words are beneficial, fruitful, rich with meaning, and all who mean well should accept them.

40 Dharma, artha and kāma should be given equal importance. Worthless is the man who becomes a *bhakta* of only one of them. Average is he who devotes himself to two. Superior is he who pursues each of the triple ideal with equal enthusiasm.

41 That man is wise, his friends anoint him with sandalpaste, and he goes about splendidly attired and ornamented and garlanded." To his brave brothers Bhīma gave his views in brief and in detail, and then kept silent.

42 It was now the turn of Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, finest of the finest-of-dharma-knowers, who had listened carefully to Bhīma, to reflect for a while before saying, with a smile:

43 "Doubtless all of you have deep knowledge of the dharma-śāstras, and your views have the sanction of authority. I wanted to know your considered and considerable views, and I have listened very attentively to you. You must now listen carefully to what I say, with undivided concentration.

44 The man who does not delight in either wrong-doing or doing good, the man who does not delight in artha, dharma or kāma, the fault-free man to whom gold and mud are the same – that man is liberated from the limitations of joy and sorrow, and the compulsions of achievement and success.

45 All creatures are subject to birth and death, to disease and decay. These who know what life is praise the ultimate emancipation known as mokṣa. But we do not know what mokṣa is.

46 Bhagavān Svayambhū Self-Born Brahmā has said that there is no *mukti*-emancipation for a person caught up in ties of affection. Wise man seek nirvāṇa. It follows, therefore, that one should rise above likes and dislikes, and pleasant and unpleasant.

47 This seems to be the best way, but it is not for the man who is motivated by kāma. What I do, is not always what I want to do. Some superior power directs the activities of all creatures. All of you should accept the operation of this absolute power.

48 No matter what you do, you cannot attain what is unattainable. What will be, will be. This you must keep in mind. It seems, however, that by withdrawing yourself from the triple ideal of dharma-artha-kāma you can attain what is described as nirvāṇa. Well, then, this is the secret to bring about the welfare of the world."

49 Vaiśampāyana continued: The brothers heard the carefully reasoned, mind-inspiring and excellent explain of the finest-of-Kaurava-heroes Yudhiṣṭhira, and they applauded loudly and rejoiced. They offered him *añjali*.

50 O earth-lord Janamejaya! Those Indra-like heroes heard the views of Pṛthā-Kuntī's son Yudhiṣṭhira, beautifully articulated and pleasingly presented, free from any thorn-like linguistic blemish, and they praised him profusely.

51 The valiant mahā-minded son of Dharma also praised his thoughtful listeners. Then he turned to Bhīṣma, the liberal-minded son of the finest of rivers, and asked him about the nature of dharma.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-EIGHT

1 "O mahā-wise Pitāmaha! Enhancer of the happiness of the Kauravas! I am going to put to you a question to which I would like a detailed answer.

2 If you ask me, no amount of wealth and no relatives can ever take the place of a good friend.

4 It is very hard to make a friend who really listens to what you have to say, and equally hard to make a friend who truly wishes you well. O finest-of-all-who-uphold-dharma, I want you to answer me this in every detail."

5 "Rājā Yudhiṣṭhira," replied Bhīṣma, "listen to me, and I will tell you all about with whom you should be friends, and with whom you should not be friends.

6 The greedy, the cruel, one who rejects dharma, the wrong-doer, the rascally, the mean, one who spreads wickedness, one who suspects everyone, the indolent,

7 The endlessly garrulous, the double-dealing, the universally disliked, one who sleeps with his guru's wife, one who abandons people in a crisis, the ill-ātmaned, the shameless;

8 One who sees wickedness everywhere, the negative-thinking *nāstīka*, one who mocks the Vedas, one who cannot control his senses, one who delights in kāma;

9 The untruthful, one who earns everyone's rebuke, one who changes whenever convenient, one who stupidly gossips, the envious, the committed to criminal activity;

10 The bad-charactered, the one with an ill-developed ātman, the violent, the gambler, one who always takes advantage of his friends, one who is always self-seeking,

11 The fool who is never satisfied with what is spontaneously given, and one, O bull-brave Bharata, who is never pleased with his friends;

12 One who loses his temper when there is no reason to lose it, one who deserts his friends impulsively and pointlessly;

13 The fool who takes slight at even the slightest and unintended offence, and he, O lord of men, who suspects his friends but runs to them for help;

14 One who has the face of a friend but the heart of an enemy, one who is always finding fault, one who praises you but looks the other way, one who is never happy with his own prosperity or with others' prosperity;

15 The drunkard, the always quarrelsome, the anger-possessed, the one who lacks compassion, one who is pained by others' happiness, one who harms friends, one who kills creatures out of blood-lust;

16 One who is ungrateful, one who is thoroughly despicable – these are the types one should avoid. Stay away from anyone whose aim is to create discord. Let me now give you a list of those you should associate with.

17 People born in good families, whose speech is civilised, learned in *jñāna-vijñāna* arts and sciences, pleasant-looking, possessing guṇa-merits, people who are not greedy, people who can do hard work without getting exhausted;

18 People who are genuinely friendly, who are grateful, who are all-knowing, who are free from avarice, who have charming *guṇa*-manners, who are dedicated to truth, who have their senses well-disciplined;

19 Who exercise well and regularly, whose lineage is respectable, who continue the noble traditions of their families, who are fault-free, who enjoy deserved respect – these are the kinds of men an earth-lord should mix with.

20 *Prabhu*-lord! People who are content with doing whatever they do as best as they can, who do not lose their temper when there is no reason to lose their temper, whose affection is not whimsical and impulsive, who even when upset do not wish to harm others, whose minds can concentrate intelligently on artha-business matters;

21 Who are committed to helping others even if their ātman experiences much hardship, whose affection for their friends is as unfading as the rich red colour of a woollen blanket;

22 Who do not angrily look down on a friend who is not rich, who do not greedily and obsessively desire the company of young girls, who trust their friends and are devoted to dharma;

23 To whom a lump of clay and gold are the same, who are rock-firm in their friendships, who discard their *abhimān*-self-importance in order to ensure the welfare of their friends,

24 And, more than their own, are concerned with the welfare of others – a king should seek to associate with such excellent personalities.

25 Then will his kingdom shine with the sweeping radiance of the sun. Those who devote themselves to study of the śāstras, who subdue their anger, who are resolute on the battlefield,

26 Who are noble-born, who have admirable *guṇa*-qualities of character – these are the *puruṣottama* finest-of-men to have as friends. O defectless one! Of the fault-filled men whom I have listed,

27 The worst foe of a friend, O rājā, is the despicable wretch who is ungrateful. Stay very far away from such a scoundrel. Make no mistake about this."

28 Yudhiṣṭhira said: "I would like to know more about this, in detail – about this ungrateful foe of a friend."

29 "O lord of men!" replied Bhīṣma. "Let me tell you a historical story of the distant past. This event took place among the *mlecchas* of the north.

30 There was this Brahmin from the central part of the territory. He had no Brahma-knowledge at all. He chanced on a prosperous village and thought it a good place to seek alms.

31 Now it so happened that in that village lived an affluent robber, very affluent indeed, who knew everything about the four *varṇa*-castes. He had a soft spot for Brahmins, and he loved giving lavish gifts.

32 The Brahmin turned up at his house and begged for alms; specifically, he wanted a roof above his head where he could shelter for one whole year.

33 The robber gave the Brahmin what he wanted, as well as an excellent new full-length robe and a young girl deserted by her husband.

34 Overjoyed was the twice-born recipient of the robber's largesse. O rājā! That Gautama Brahmin passed his days happily with the girl in his spacious residence.

35 He lent a helping hand to the relatives of the girl, and many years he spent living a life of comfort in the house gifted by the Śabara robber.

36 Gautama learnt archery with consumate skill. Every day he went to the forest; wild geese

37 Were his favourite targets, O rājā, and Gautama was merciless in his slaughter of those birds, relishing, as robbers do, the killing of creatures.

38 Because he associated so closely with robbers, he became like one of them. He enjoyed himself in that village of robbers,

39 And month after month passed in this way, with more and more birds targeted and killed. One day, another Brahmin happened to come to that place.

40 He was matted-haired and dressed in rags and deerskin. A supremely learned man, pure-minded, humble, a frugal eater, wise-in-the-Vedas, deeply disciplined, and Brahma-experienced.

41 He was a brahmacārī, and a truly loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend of Gautama. It was pure chance that brought him to the village of the robber and the house of Gautama.

42 Because he did not eat food touched by Śūdras, he kept searching the village for a Brahmin's house in that village that teemed with robbers.

43 Finally that finest-of-the-twice-born arrived at Gautama's residence. It so happened that Gautama was returning home from the forest. The two met.

44 Gautama was carrying a bow and arrows, and on his shoulders was a heap of *cakrāṅga* geese he had killed. His body was stained with blood,

45 Looking like a horrendous cannibal, fallen from the grace and purity of his Brahmin caste. The Brahmin visitor recognised him. Embarrassed, he asked:

46 'What's this? What's wrong with you? You are a Brahmin of the central territories, a respected enhancer of your family's glory. You, a robber?

47 Think, O Brahmin, of your background – a long lineage of ancestors wise-in-the-Vedas. Fallen from so high to so low! Such a family disgrace!

48 Don't you know your own ātman? Wake up! Your *sattva*, your character, your *śruti*-learning, your self-control, your compassion! Think of them, and be the twice-born you are!'

49 O rājā! Reprimanded by his friend who wished his welfare, Gautama was deeply upset but he replied gently:

50 'Finest-of-the-twice-born! I have no money. I am ignorant of the Vedas. I am here just surviving somehow, that's all.

51 O Indra-like twice-born one! I am favoured today by your darshan. How fortunate I am. Tomorrow we will leave this place. Spend this night at least with me.'

52 The Brahmin visitor stayed for the night, but did not touch anything in that house. He was hungry, and Gautama repeatedly asked him to eat, but he refused to accept any food.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SIXTY-NINE

1 O descendant of Bharata (continued Bhīṣma), the night passed. That excelling Brahmin left, and Gautama came out of his dwelling and proceeded towards the sea.

2 There he met some seafaring traders, inhabitants of that area; he joined their caravan, and together they made their way to the seashore.

3 On the way, however, O rājā, that large caravan was attacked by a musth elephant, and most of the travellers were killed.

4 Luckily, the Brahmin escaped that calamity, and fled for dear life northwards.

5 No caravan, no country, all alone, he ran around wildly in the forest like a *kiṁpuruṣa*, a half-horse half-man creature.

6 And then in front of him he saw a road that led to the seashore. He reached a heavenly forest full of flowering trees.

7 A perennially flowering forest, abounding in mango trees, inhabited by yakṣas and *kinnaras,* a veritable celestial Nandana grove.

8 Śāla-tāla-and-tamāla trees in profusion, and black aloes, and exquisite sandalwood scattering the sweetest fragrance in the undulating landscape,

9 Mellifluent with the chirpings of lovely birds. And *bhāruṇḍa*-birds also, with faces like those of human beings, singing sweetly.

10 *Bhūliṅga*-birds as well, and others from the sea and from the hilly regions warbled their melodies. Enchanted by the heart-charming music of the birds,

11 Gautama the Brahmin walked on, surrounded by sweet sounds. He saw a level stretch of land covered with golden sand,

12 A stretch of land, O king, that looked like enchanting heaven itself. In the middle of that stretch of land, spread like a maṇḍala, was a mahā-banyan, a *śrī*-radiant giant *nyagrodha.*

13 Its branches arched out like a huge umbrella, its roots were nourished with sprinklings of sandalwood leaves and twigs.

14 A tree that looked like the *sabhā*-hall of *śrī*-fulfilled Pitāmahā Brahmā himself, so lovely was it with its divine-looking flowers. Seeing it, the heart of Gautama was flooded with joy.

15 All around it were flowering trees: it was like the house of a god, a *sura-gṛha.* Overjoyed, Gautama sat under its shade.

16 O Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira! A soothing, auspicious, fragrance-filled breeze wafted around the banyan, caressing, O king, the body of Gautama and refreshing his heart.

17 So soothed was the Brahmin by the feel of the breeze that he lapsed into a languorous happiness. In the meantime, the sun had set in the Asta hills.

18 With the setting of the radiant sun and the arrival of *saṁdhyā*-twilight, the finest-of-birds returned to his home from the realm of Brahmā.

19 The bird's name was Nāḍijaṅga; he was the *sakhā*-friend of Brahmā; he was the Baka-rāja, the king-of-cranes; he was the very own son of Kaśyapa.

20 On earth he was acclaimed as Rāja-dharma. He had no one his equal on earth. He was the son of a *deva-kanyā*, a god's daughter. He radiated *śrī*-glory. He was learned. He glowed like a god.

21 Glittering with body-ornaments that dazzled like the sun, that child of a divine womb blazed with the lustre of *śrī*-affluence.

22 Astonishment suffused Gautama at the sight of the bird. But he was famished and fatigued, and he wondered how to kill the bird.

23 Rāja-dharma said to him: "*Svāgataṁ*. You are welcome, O Brahmin. My good fortune that you have come to my house. The sun has set. It is the time of *saṁdhyā*-twilight.

24 You have come to my house as a dear guest, an irreproachable visitor. I offer you my pūjā-respect as ordained by tradition. Accept it, for you leave in the morning."

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY

1 Bhīṣma continued: Gautama was deeply touched by the sweetness of the welcome. But he was also curious, O rājā, and he stared closely at Rāja-dharma.

2 Rāja-dharma said: "O most excellent of the twice-born! I am Kaśyapa's son, my mother was Dāksāyaṇī. You are a guest laden with guṇa-virtues. I welcome you. *Svāgatam.*"

3 He honoured Gautama with all the rites enjoined by tradition. He placed for him a celestial cushion fashioned from *śāla*-flowers.

4 From the waters of the Gaṅga, which are traversed by the chariot of Bhagīratha, he brought mahā-sized fishes and offered them to his guest.

5 Kaśyapa's son lit a mahā-oven for his guest Gautama, and placed a fish before him.

6 The Brahmin ate the fish to his heart's content. The bird of mahā-tapasyā fanned away the fatigue of his guest by flapping his wings.

7 To the relaxed Brahmin he asked: "What is your *gotra*?" The reply came: "I am a Gautama Brahmin." Then, complete silence.

8 The bird readied a comfortable bed made of leaves and scented with flower-fragrance. Gautama stretched himself on it, happily.

9 Then, O Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira, the inquisitive bird, Kaśyapa's son, enquired: "What brings you here?"

10 To which, O Bharata descendant, Gautama replied: "Poverty, O mahā-minded one. I planned to go to the sea to acquire wealth."

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11 Kaśyapa's son was delighted and said: "O excellent twice-born! No need to look any further. Your mission is accomplished. You will return home loaded with riches.

12 *Prabhu*-lord! According to Bṛhaspati, there are four ways of becoming rich: inheritance, destiny, hard work, and friends.

13 Have I not become your friend? Are you not friends with me? I will try my very best for you, and see that you become rich."

14 At dawn, after seeing to the comfort of his guest, the bird said: "*Saumya*, my good friend, take this road, and you will get what you desire.

15 Three *yojanas* away from here is the place of a mahā-ruler of the rākṣasas, whose name is Virūpākṣa, who is mahā-powerful. He is also my loved-and-loving *sakhā*-friend.

16 O chief of the twice-born! Go to him. Mention me to him, and he will give you whatever you ask. No doubt of that."

17 Gautama listened carefully, O rājā, and with great alacrity, refreshed, took the road indicated. Subsisting on the way on amborsial fruits to his heart's content,

18 He passed through groves of leafy sandalwood and *aguru* trees. He travelled swiftly, mahārāja, to reach his destination.

19 He arrived at a city called Meruvraja, surrounded by a moat, stone walls, defensive ramparts, and various other protective devices.

20 And news was rushed to the wise Indra-among-rākṣasas: "O rājā! Your dear friend has sent a dear guest to you."

21 Yudhiṣṭhira! That Indra-among-rākṣasas immediately ordered: "Meet Gautama at the city gate and escort him to me."

22 Swift as eagles, men rushed out of the magnificent palace and escorted Gautama from the gate of the city.

23 Mahārāja! They hurriedly told him, "The rājā wants to see you. Come with us quickly, O twice-born one!

24 The valiant lord of the rākṣasas Virūpākṣa waits impatiently. Hurry!"

25 The Brahmin was so taken by surprise that he forgot his tiredness, and quickly accompanied them. Seeing the opulence of the city, he was spellbound.

26 Escorted by the messengers, he entered the rājā's palace eager to have a darshan of the Indra-among-rākṣasas.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-ONE

1 Bhīṣma continued: He was given audience before the rājā in a magnificent room of the palace. The Indra-among-rākṣasas pūjā-respected him, and motioned him to a spendid seat.

2 When asked about his *gotra*-lineage and his study of the Vedas as a brahmacārī, he gave out his *gotra* but kept silent on the other questions.

3 Furnished only with details of the *gotra*, the rājā pressed the shorn-of-Brahma-radiance and destitute-of-Veda-studies Brahmin with more questions.

4 The rākṣasa asked: "Gracious one! Where do you live? What is the *gotra* of your Brahmin wife? Tell me the truth. Do not fear. Have full faith in me."

5 Gautama replied: "I was born in the central regions. I live in a village of the Śabaras. My wife is a Śūdra widow. This is the whole truth."

6 Bhīṣma continued: The rājā wondered: "What is all this? What is all this? What merit is there for me in all this?" He pondered deeply.

7 He thought: "This man is only born a Brahmin. He is of course a friend of mahā-ātmaned Rāja-dharma,

8 Kasyapa's son, who obviously wants me to favour him, because he has always depended on me. He is to me like my brother, a relative, a *sakhā*-friend, very close to my heart.

9 Tonight is the Kārtika full moon. A thousand of the finest Brahmins will be feasting in my palace. Let him enjoy the feast also; and I will give him some wealth as well.

10 This is a sacred day, and he has come to me as a guest. I have made all preparations to distribute wealth among Brahmins today. Why should I have second thoughts on this?"

11 A thousand eminently erudite Brahmins arrived there, having purified themselves by bathing, elegantly adorned, and dressed in unstitched linen robes.

12 O lord of the world! Virūpākṣa welcomed his excellent twice-born guests as ordained in the sacred texts.

13 O finest of the Bharatas! On orders from the Indra-among-rākṣasas, attendants placed exquisite kuśa-grass mats for them to sit on.

14 After the excellent twice-born guests were comfortably seated, the rājā pūjā-respected them with sesame seeds, sacred grass and water.

15 Treating some among them as Viśvadevas, *pitṛs* and Agnis, he pūjā-respected them with offerings of sandalplaste, and garlanded them with flowers. Sitting there, mahārāja, each Brahmin shone like the lord-of-planets, the moon.

16 Then he placed, before them, gleaming plates of *jāmbū-nadi* gold studded with diamonds, on which were heaped delicious dishes rich in ghee and honey.

17 This was a regular celebration for the twice-born who were feasted during the full-moon nights of Āṣāḍha and Māgha.

18 For it is said that the full-moon night of Kārtika was very special, at the end of autumn, for on that day lavish gifts of gems were offered to Brahmins,

19 Gifts of gold and silver, and diamonds and pearls –

20 Such mahā-wealth comprising *vaidūrya* lapis lazuli, *ajina* deerskins and skins of the *raṅku*-deer, and heaps and heaps of other precious stones offered, O Bharata, as *dakṣiṇā.*

21 Placing these gifts before the excellent twice-born, maha-powerful Virūpākṣa said: "Take as many gems as you like, whatever suits your fancy.

22 O finest of the twice-born! Feel free to take with you, when you leave, the plates from which you have eaten." This is what he would announce, O Bharata.

23 Taking the mahā-ātmaned Indra-among-rākṣasas at his word, the bull-brave Brahmins took with them to their homes all the precious gems they could carry.

24 Extremely pleased were the elegantly dressed Brahmins with the mahā-wealth that was offered to them in reverence.

25 Then, O rājā, that Indra-among-rākṣasas saw fit to restrain the rākṣasas who had come from various territories to attend his celebration. He said to the Brahmins:

26 "Brahmins! For one day, that is today, you need not fear any danger from any rākṣasa. Feel free to enjoy yourselves, and go wherever you like."

27 The Brahmins heard him, and speedily left the place. Gautama also ran off with a treasure of gold.

28 Panting under that heavy burden of wealth, he reached the same banyan. Fatigued, and famished, he slumped down under the tree.

29 And then, O rājā, that finest-of-birds Rāja-dharma, that *mitra-vatsala* friend-devotee also came there and warmly welcomed Gautama.

30 Flapping his wings, the supremely wise bird removed the weariness of Gautama; then, pūjā-respecting him, he prepared a meal for Gautama.

31 Finishing his meal, and recovering his strength, Gautama thought: *I have this mahā-heavy load to carry with me –*

32 *A load that my greed and my folly have placed on my head. I have far to go. I have no food to eat on the way. How will I survive?*

33 This thought troubled him. Realising that he had nothing to eat on his way back, that ungrateful wretch, O tiger-brave Yudhiṣṭhira,

34 Made up his mind: *Here, next to me, is this mahā-huge heap of flesh, this lord of cranes Baka-pati. I'll kill him and take him with me and run away.*

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-TWO

1 To help his friend (continued Bhīṣma), the Indra-among-birds had ignited nearby a mahā-blaze whose flames were fanned by the wind-charioteer.

2 In the meantime, the ungrateful, wicked-ātmaned Brahmin decided to kill the rājā-of-cranes, who was sleeping trustfully.

3 With a flaming log he killed the trusting bird. He was delighted. It never occurred to him that he had committed a crime.

4 He stripped the bird's wings and feathers and roasted him on the flames. Carrying the cooked flesh and the load of gold, the twice-born left as fast as he could.

5 And because Dākṣāyaṇi's son Rāja-dharma did not come to meet him that day, Virūpākṣa was deeply worried, wondering why his friend was absent.

6 The next day passed; then Virūpākṣa turned to his son and said: "My son, what is the matter? I do not see the finest-of-birds Rāja-dharma anywhere.

7 Every day, at *saṁdhyā*-morning time, he would go and offer his reverence to Brahmā, and visit me without fail on his way back home.

8 Two morning-*saṁdhyās* have passed, and two evening *saṁdhyās*, and he has not come to my place. What can be wrong? Go and enquire where my friends is.

9 This devoid-of-Vedic-learning and bereft-of-Brahma-lustre Brahmin – I suspect him. He must have killed my friend. That twice-born scoundrel!

10 I knew it. He had all the signs of a criminal mind and gross misconduct. Without compassion, horrible even to look at, scoundrel, filthy robber!

11 Gautama went to my friend's place. That makes me fear the worst. Son, go this instant to the abode of Rāja-dharma,

12 And find out if my pure-ātmaned friend is alive or not. Hurry!" The son rushed with a group of rākṣasas

13 To the banyan, where he spotted the skeletal remains of Rāja-dharma. The supremely wise son of the Indra-among-rākṣasas broke into loud sobbing,

14 And ran as fast as he could to apprehend Gautama. Before too long, he glimpsed Gautama, some distance ahead, and seized him.

15 He also recovered the corpse of Rāja-dharma, without its wings, bones, and feet. He hurried back to Meruvraja.

16 He displayed the disfigured corpse of Rāja-dharma to the rājā, and brought before him the ungrateful, vile crime-perpetrator Gautama.

17 When the rājā and his ministers and *purohitas* saw the corpse, they broke down and wept. Mahā-loud was the piercing grief that filled the palace –

18 The collective grief of the palace ladies and children and the towns people. A mind-numbering grief! The king ordered his son: "Execute his criminal.

19 Let all the rākṣasas feast on his flesh! Wicked conduct, wicked karma, wicked ātman, wicked commitment –

20 Kill him, O rākṣasas. My judgment is final and absolute." Despite the unequivocal order of the Indra-among-rākṣasas, the fearfully valiant

21 Rākṣasas refused to eat the condemned Brahmin, because he was contaminated by his criminal karma. "Hand this foul wretch today to *dasyu*-robbers,

22 Mahārāja," the night-prowlers said to the Indra-among-rākṣasas, *praṇāma-ing* their heads low at the feet of the lord-of-the-rākṣasas.

23 "Do not order us to partake of his filthy crime." To which the Indra-among-rākṣasas replied, advising the night-prowlers:

24 "So be it, O rākṣasas. Turn this ungrateful wretch over to *daysū*-robbers." So the rākṣasas, brandishing lances and *paṭṭiśa*-axes,

25 Sliced that scoundrel into small pieces which they handed over to *dasyū*-robbers. But the robbers also refused to eat the flesh of the criminal.

26 O Indra-among-rājās! Even carrion-consumers do not eat the flesh of an ungrateful scoundrel. Brahmin-killers, alcohol-drinkers, thieves, and vow-breakers

27 Can expiate for their misdeeds, O rājā, but the tradition allows for no expiation for an ungrateful wretch. The ungrateful friend-betrayer is the vilest and most brutal of men – even cannibals will not eat his flesh, nor will worms and maggots.

SECTION ONE HUNDRED SEVENTY-THREE

1 Bhīṣma continued: The rākṣasa ordered the construction of a funeral pyre for the lord-of-cranes Baka-pati, decorating it with gems and scents and a variety of other trappings.

2 Placing the corpse of the rājā-of-cranes on the pyre, the illustrious Indra-among-rākṣasas lit the pyre and performed the *preta-kārya* obsequies as ordained by tradition.

3 At that time Surabhī-devī, the lovely auspicious daughter of Dakṣa, appeared before them from above, streaming a flow of milk.

4 O fault-free one! From her mouth, a mix of foam and milk covered the funeral pyre of Rāja-dharma.

5 O fault-free one! Immediately the rājā-of-cranes revived. The chief-of-cranes rose and approached Virūpākṣa.

6 That was also when Devarāja Indra arrived in the city of Virūpākṣa, and said to him: "How fortunate that by your grace he has revived!"

7 Indra narrated to Virūpākṣa an ancient story of how a curse was cast on Rāja-dharma by Brahmā.

8 "It so happened one day, O rājā, that the lord-of-cranes Rāja-dharma failed to turn up before Brahma, which made the Pitāmaha so furious that he declared:

9 'The vile and foolish crane has not come to my sabhā. That wicked-ātmaned bird will soon have to pay for this with his life.'

10 This is why the bird got killed by Gautama – because Brahmā ordained it. And, similarly, the crane was revived by the sprinkling of *amṛta*-nectar.

11 The crane Rāja-dharma *praṇāma-ed* Puraṁdara-Indra and said: 'O lord of the gods! Sureśvara! If you desire to do me this favour,

12 Restore my *sakhā*-friend Gautama to life.' Agreeing to the plea, O bull-brave Yudhiṣṭhira, Vāsava-Indra

13 Sprinkled *amṛta*-nectar on Gautama and restored him to life. The lord-of-cranes, O rājā, approached his gold-burdened

14 Friend, and embraced him with the deepest affection. By Lord-of-cranes Rāja-dharma that man of criminal karma,

15 Still carrying that weight of wealth, was dismissed, and sent to his home. At the right time, the crane went to the realm of Brahmā,

16 And received from Brahmā the pūjā-respect appropriate to a deserving mahātmā guest. Gautama continued to stay among the Śabaras, and by his Śūdra wife he fathered many wicked-deed-doing sons.

17 All the gods pronounced a mahā-curse on Gautama: 'He will father many wicked sons in the womb of his remarried widow;

18 This ungrateful wretch will then go to a mahā-horrible hell.' All this, O Bharata descendant, was narrated to me a long time ago by Nārada.

[XII:173:19-26]

19 I recall clearly the details of this truly mahā-serious story, O bull-brave Bharata, and I have recounted them exactly as I heard them.

20 What glory can there be for an ungrateful person? What is his status? His happiness? You can never trust an ungrateful man. There is no expiation for an ungrateful man.

21 Above all else, never betray a friend. An endless, gruesome hell awaits the person who betrays his friend.

22 Always be grateful to a friend, always work for a friend's welfare. From friends comes every benefit, pūjā-respect comes from friends.

23 Friends provide enjoyment of all kinds, friends save you in times of crisis. One who sees clearly will always pūjā-respect his friends with supreme dedication.

24 If you are wise, stay away from the wicked, the ungrateful, the shameless; the betrayer of a friend is like a burning coal in his family, he is the vilest of men of vicious karma.

25 O finest of those who uphold dharma! I have given you a list of wicked, treacherous and ungrateful men and how to recognise them. What else would you like to know?

26 Vaiśampāyana said: O Janamejaya! These words of mahātmā Bhīṣma delighted and inspired Yudhiṣṭhira.

Transcreated by P. Lal

This internationally accepted system of Roman transliteration of the Devanāgari alphabet is followed in this transcreation.

V O W E L S

Guttural	अ	आ	
	a	ā	
Palatal	इ	ई	
	i	ī	
Labial	उ	ऊ	
	u	ū	
Dental	ऋ		
	ṛ		
Guttural-Palatal		ए	ऐ
	e	ei	
Guttural-Labial		ओ	औ
	o	au	

C O N S O N A N T S

Guttural	क	ख	ग	घ	ङ	ह	:
	k	kh	g	gh	ṅ	h	ḥ
Palatal	च	छ	ज	झ	ञ	य	श
	c	ch	j	jh	ñ	y	ś
Lingual	ट	ठ	ड	ढ	ण	र	ष
	ṭ	ṭh	ḍ	ḍh	ṇ	r	ṣ
Dental	त	थ	द	ध	न	ल	स
	t	th	d	dh	n	l	s
Labial	प	फ	ब	भ	म	व	
	p	ph	b	bh	m	v	

Anusvāra = ṁ

CANTO XII

Śāntiparva : The Book of Peace

Chapter 84 — *Rājadharmaparva (Rājadharmānusasanaparvan* in Cal. Ed. Chap. 88) Relating to the duties of a king. Sec. 1–128. [Cr. Ed.]; 1–130 (Cal.Ed.)

*i) *Ṛṣiśakunisaṁvāda* : The discussion between Indra disguised as a vulture and a group of young sages.

ii) *Janakopakhyānaḥ*: Episode of Janaka.

iii) *Devasthānavakyaṃ*: A speech by Devasthana.

iv) *Śaṅkha–Likhitopakhyānaṃ*: Episode of *Śaṅkha* and Likhita.

v) *Hayagrivopākhyānaṃ*: Episode of Hayagrīva.

vi) *Senajitvākyaṃ*: Senajit's discourse with a *Brā hmaṇa.*

vii) *Aśma–Janakasṁvāda* : A dialogue between *Aśma* and *Janaka.*

viii) *Śoḍasarājakiyopākhyānaṃ*: Episode of sixteen great kings.

ix) *Suvarṇasthivyupākhyānaṃ*: Episode of *Suvarṇasthivi.*

x) *Cārvākacaritakathanaṃ*: Episode of *Cārvāka.*

xi) *Kṛṣṇanamaśatastuti* : 100 names in the praise of *Kṛṣṇa.*

xii) *Bhiṣmastavarajaḥ*: Eulogy of Krsna by Bhisma.

xiii) *Jamodagnopākhyānaṃ* : Episode of *Rāma Jāmadagni.*

xiv) Indra-*Māndhātrsaṁvāda* : History of Indra and *Māndhāta.*

xv) *Mnurajakaranopanyāsaḥ*: The importance of a king and the installation of *Manu* as such.

xvi) *Bṛhaspati–Kauśalyasaṁvādaḥ*: The discussion between *Bṛhaspati* and *Vasumāna* of *Kośala.*

xvii) *Purūravā*-Pavana-*saṁvāda*: A dialogue between *Purūravā* and Pavana.

xviii) *Aila–Kaśyapasaṁvāda* : A discourse between Aila [*Purūravā*.] and *Kaśyapa.*

xix) *Mucukundopākhyānaṃ*: Episode of *Mucukunda.*

xx) *Kekayarajārākṣasasaṁvāda*: The discussion between the Kekaya king and the '*rākṣasa*'.

xxi) *Vāsudeva Nāradasamvādaḥ* The discussion among *Vāsudeva Kṛṣṇa* and *Nārada.*

xxii) *Kālakavṛkṣiyopākhyānam*: Episode *Kālakavṛkṣiya.*

xxiii) *Śakra–Bṛhaspatisaṁvādaḥ* : The discussion between *Śakra* and *Bṛhaspati.*

xxiv) *Utathya–Gitā* : The history of Utathya.

xxv) *Vāmadeva–Gitā* : The history of *Vāmadeva.*

xxvi) *Indra–Ambariṣasaṁvāda* Episode of *Indra* and *ambariṣa.*

xxvii) *Indra–Bṛhaspatismvāda*: The discussion between Indra and *Bṛhaspati.*

xxviii) *Vyaghragomāyusaṁvādaḥ*: A dialogue between a tiger and a fox.

xxix) *Uṣtraśirogrivakathanam*: A dialogue between a tiger and a fox.

xxx) *Saritasāgarasṁvādaḥ* : A dialogue between the river and the sea.

xxxi) *Ṛṣisaṁvādaḥ*: Episode of a '*ṛṣi*' and a dog.

xxxii) Vasuhoma–*Māndhātrsaṁvādaḥ*: The discussion between *Vasuhoma and Māndhātā.*

xxxiii) *Kāmandāṅgarṣtasaṁvādaḥ* : The discussion between *Kāmanda* and *Aṅgariṣta.*

xxxiv) *Ṛṣabha–Sumitrasaṁvādaḥ* : The discussion between the sage *Ṛṣabha* and *Sumitra.*

*xxxv) *Yama–Gautamasasaṁvādaḥ* : A dialogue between *Yama* and *Gautama.*

Chapter 85 *Āpaddharmaparva(n)* [Chap. 89 in Cal. Ed.] : Relating to the duties in need. Sec. 129-167 [Cr.Ed.] 131-173 (Cal. Ed.)

*i) *Kāpavyānusasanam*: Episode of *Kāpavya*, the hunter.

ii) *Śakulakhyānam*: Episode of the three fishes..

iii) *Marjaramusikasaṁvādaḥ* : Episode of a cat and a mouse.

iv) *Brāhmadatta-Pujanisaṁvādaḥ* : Episode of king *Brahmadatta* and *Pujani*, the bird.

v) *Kaṇikka–Satruṅtapasaṁvādaḥ* : The dialogue between *Bharadvāja* and *Śatruṅtapa.*

vi) *Visvāmitrasvapacasaṁvāda* : Episode of *Visvāmitra* and a '*caṇḍāla*'

vii) *Kaotalubhadhakasṁvādaḥ*: Episode of the dove and the hunter.

viii) *Indrotaśaunaka-Pārikṣitiyaṃ* : The instruction of Indrota, a descendant of *Śunaka*, of *Janamejaya Pārikṣita.*

ix) *Gṛdhajamvukasṁvādaḥ* : Episode of a jackal and a vulture.

x) *Śālmali-Pavanasaṁvādaḥ*: A dialogue between Pavana and the salmali tree.

xi) Khadgotpattih : The origin of the divine khadga (falchion).

xii) *Kṛtaghna–Gautamopāruṣanaṃ*: Episode of the ungrateful *Brāhmana Gautama.*

Courtesy:

Madhusraba Dasgupta
Samsad Companion to the Mahābhārata
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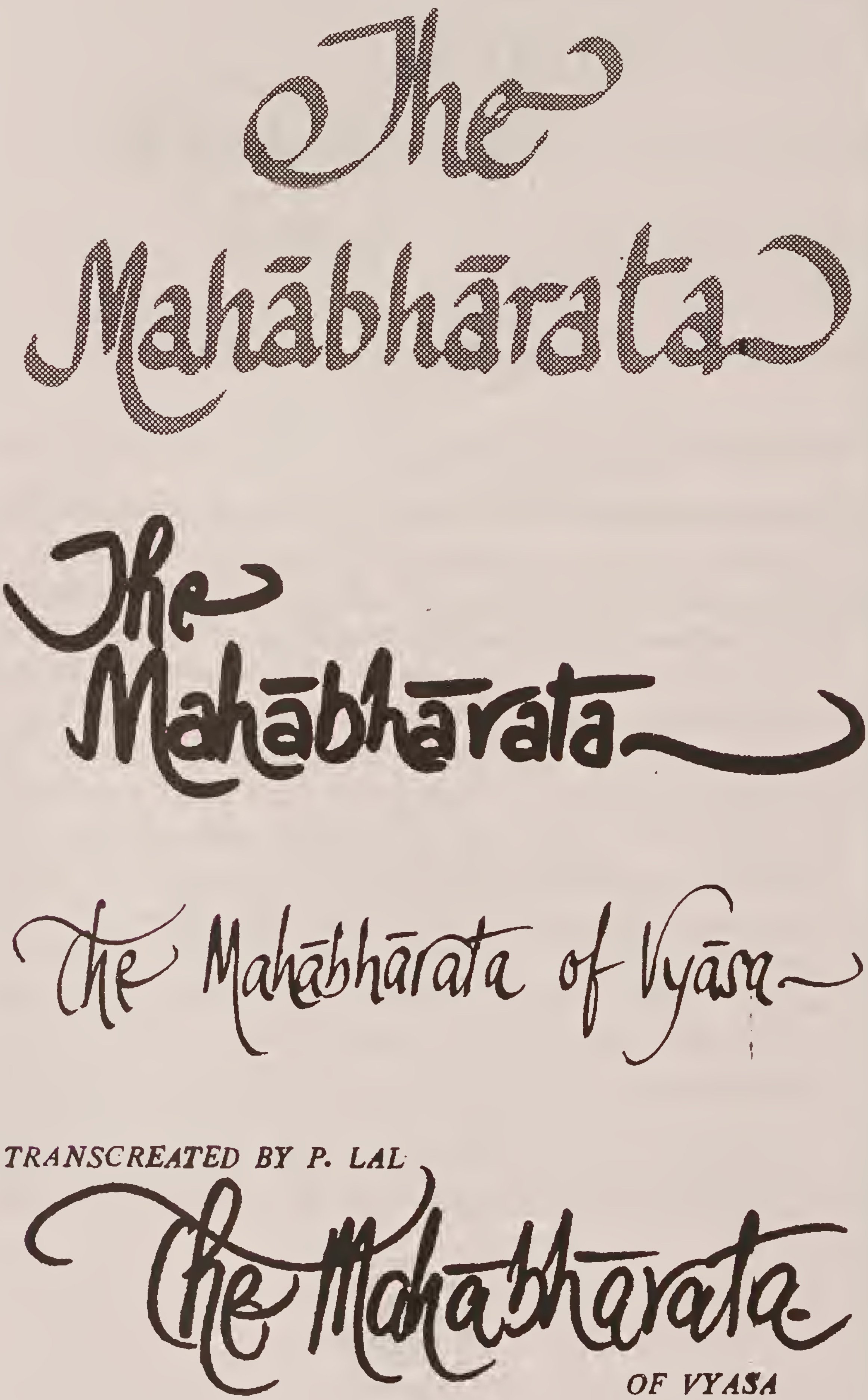
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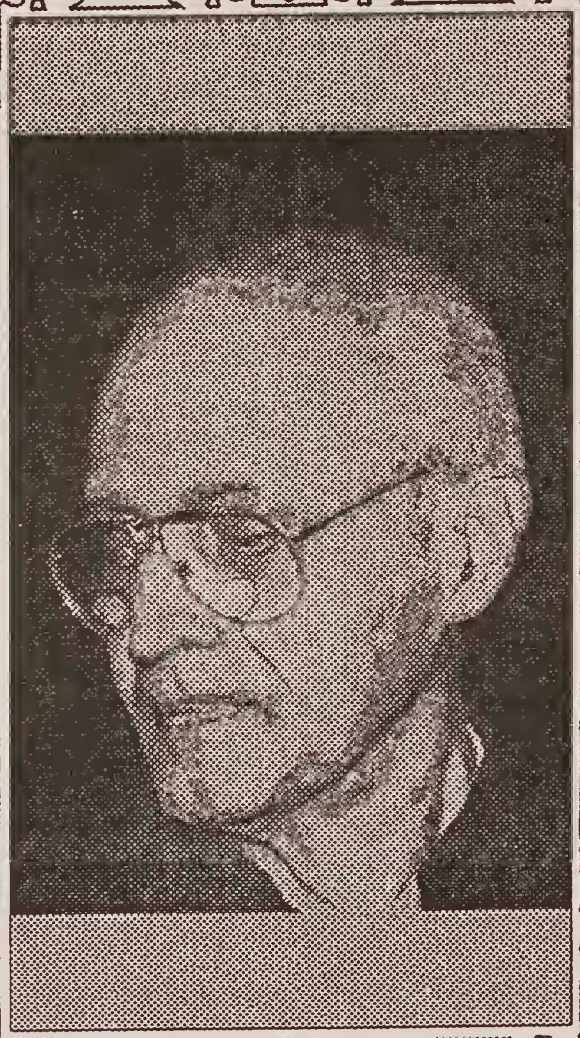
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Ārya-varta
at the time of the Mahābhārata

Sketch by P. Lal based on *The Historical Atlas of South Asia* [University of Minnesota]



Sketch by P. Lal

The Mahabh

Atr

Soma (Chan

marries De

(The Yadava race)

Yayati marries Devayani

Yadu (& another son Anu)

Vrishni (son)

Devarata (son)

Andhaka (son)

Shura (son)

Vasudeva (son) — Kunti (daughter) marries Pandu

Balarama (son) — Krishna (son) marries Satyabhama — Subhadra (daughter) marries Arjuna

Abhimanyu (son)

Samba (son of Jambavati)

(Line extinct)

(Satyava
union with
has s
Vichitrav

Dhritarashtra
(son by Ambika)

marries Gandhari

Duryodhana
& ninetynine sons
& a daughter
Duhshala

by union with a
Vaishya woman

Yuyutsu
(youngest son)

Pand

marries

Yudhisht
Dh
Bhima (so
Arjuna (so
Arjuna m

Sketch by Srimati Lal

Family Tree

Rishi

du) the Moon

n)

)

on)

n)

Sharmishtha

(The Paurava & Kaurava race)

Yayati marries Sharmishtha

Puru (& 2 other sons. Druhyu & Turvasu)

Dushyanta (son) marries Shakuntala

Bharata (son)

Hastin (son)

Kuru (son)

Shantanu (son) marries Satyavati

re-marriage union with Ganga

Bhishma (son)

asa

y her pre-marriage
Parashara: Vyasa
two widows of
bika & Ambalika)

Chitrangada
(son) (dies childless)

Vichitravirya (son)
marries Ambika & Ambalika
(their eldest sister Amba.
reborn male as Shikhandin,
kills Bhishma in the war)

Ambalika)

Vidura (son by
low caste woman)

and

Madri

y

Nakula & Sahadeva
(twin sons by Ashvins)

u)

a)

hadra

anyu (son) marries Uttara

Parikshit (son)

Janamejaya (son)



The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from Sanskrit
by P. Lal

On the following pages are facsimile reproductions of pages from different Mahābhārata fascicules (#279-338) of the Śanti Parva, showing the Sanskrit notes and calligraphy fascicules and additions by P. Lal. These were prepared for the reading sessions of the transcreation, presented under the auspices of the Sanskriti Sagar in the Library of Dharma and Culture at the G.D. Birla Sabhagar in Kolkata. Started in October 1999, P. Lal has so far (February 2008) read 410 one-hour sessions, followed by question-and-answer periods of up to half an hour.

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from the Sanskrit by P. Lāl

Volume 279

The Rāja-dharma-anuśāsana Karṇa-abhijñāna Karṇa-śāpa & Karṇa-astra-prāpti parvas in the Śānti-Parva

SECTION 1

1 Vaiśampāyana continued: Pāṇḍu's sons,
Vidura, Dhṛtarāṣṭra, and
the Bharata ladies performed the water-
ritual for their dear departed.

2 The mahātmā Pāṇḍavas spent
a full month on the banks
of the Gangā outside the city
to complete their purification.

24 Neither did we get what we
wanted, nor they.
We lost, they lost.
No earth for them,
no lovely girls singing songs
for them.

25 No advice from ministers
and friends,
no śruti-wisdom for them
Not for them
the joys of glittering gems
and world-lordship.

26 Duryodhana burned with hatred ~
no happiness
for him. He saw us prospering,
and he suffered,
his body wilted, he became pale
and weak.

6 Who chooses to lead the life
of a beggar —
he loses son, wife, cattle-wealth,
he loses fame
in the world; he really is poor,
this poor man,
for nothing he does gets him
any glory whatsoever.

7 When you go round with a skull-pot
like a kapālin-beggar,
a despicable mendicant,
forsaking your kingdom,
leaving work half-done, what will
the world think of you?

8 Prabhu! Lord! Why are you so eager
to give up the good you can do,
and leave everything, and become
a faceless wandering beggar?

SECTION 13

1 O descendant of Bharata!
(said Sahadeva)
Renouncing things often does not work,
nor does renouncing thoughts.

2 Let our enemies enjoy whatever
dharma and happiness
comes from the renunciation
of external objects.

3 Let our friends and well-wishers
enjoy whatever dharma and
happiness comes to world-rulers
who govern their kingdoms selflessly.

4 Two syllables "mama" (me-me) mean death.
Three syllables "na mama" (not me-me)
mean non-death ~ eternal amṛta ambrosia.

25 If you lose this battle,
and surrender
your life-breath, and perish,
you will be born
again, and will have to fight
the same enemy ~ yourself.

26 O bull-brave Bharata!
Fight this battle
in your mind with an invisible
enemy ~ and win!
Fight you must ~
this is your sva-karma.

27 And if you fail, mahārāja,
to win this battle,
your plight will be terrible.
And if you win,
you will have won
literally everything.

4 When you do not fear,
and you are not feared,
when you overcome
kāma and dislike,
then you see your ātman
in yourself.

5 When you have neither hate
nor possessiveness
for any living creature
in deed, thought and speech,
then you have attained
Brahman.

6 Understand this well, O Bharata!
Kaunteya-Yudhiṣṭhira!
Whatever dharma you cherish,
that you become.
Your dharma determines
what you see in your ātman.

47 You are wise in dharma,
you are firm in truth.
O Indra-among-rājās!
The rod of punishment
is a Kṣatriya's dharma ~
not head-shaven holiness.

SECTION 24

1 The mahā-ṛṣi muni
Kṛṣṇa-Dvaipāyana
dark-skinned island-born
Vyāsa again
(continued Vaiśampāyana)
said these words
to Kuntī's son,
the one-without-a-foe
Ajātaśatru-Yudhiṣṭhira :

12 If Kāla does not will it,
the sun will not rise;
Without approval from Kāla,
the sun will not set
in the hills in the west.
And the waxing and waning
of the moon will not be,
nor the ebb and flow of the tide.

13 In this connection, Yudhiṣṭhira,
is recited
the ancient story of grief-torn
rājā Senajit.
Look upon this story
as an example.

14 Kāla is irresistible.
Mortality is its prey.
Sooner or later, everything
must succumb to Kāla.

15 Have trapped us all.
Die we all must.
How will grieving help us?
Listen to the stories
I tell you of mahā-fortune-favoured
rājās of the past.

16 Listen carefully, O king!
And see if this
does not remove your sorrow.
Listen to the lives
of these mahā-glorious dead
lords of the earth,

17 Which I will narrate in detail,
and then see
if your burning grief
is not calmed.
Malignant stars are pacified,
one's life-span increased,

143 At one of his mahā-lavish
Aśvamedha-yajñas,
rājā Pṛthu gave to Brahmins
twentyone hills
made of gold, each four hundred
arm's-lengths high.

144 Pṛthu excelled you, O Sṛñjaya,
in dharma and knowledge,
detachment and affluence; he excelled
your son in purity
and virtue. Yet he had to die.
Why are you grieving?

145 Why are you brooding in silence,
O rājā Sṛñjaya?
Have you heard what I said?
Or is it all wasted,
like the best of medicines
to a dying man?

37 Cradling in his lap
the blood-drenched body
of his son,
King Sṛñjaya
began lamenting
in inconsolable despair.

38 Equally afflicted,
the mothers of the boy
also rushed
to the spot
where Sṛñjaya
was lamenting.

39 Despite his confusion,
Sṛñjaya concentrated
his mind on me.
Intuiting his grief,
I granted him
my darshan.

SECTION 34

1 "O Pitāmaha Vyāsa!"
said Yudhiṣṭhira.
"What is the karma for which
expiation is needed?
And what kind of expiation
leads to absolution?"

2 If a man does deeds that
are forbidden
(replied Vyāsa), and does not do
what is recommended,
his misbehaviour requires him
to do expiation.

3 Any brahmacārī who wakes after sunrise
and sleeps before sunset,
who has dirty nails and black teeth,
is required to do expiation.

43 I have explained how ill-deeds can be expiated.
But there is no expiation for mahā-heinous ill-deeds.

44 Ill-deeds relating to clean food, defiled food, O rājā,
done knowingly or unknowingly, can be expiated.

45 Deliberate ill-deed is far worse than indeliberate,
and expiation also is correspondingly heavy or light.

46 The vidhi sacred texts declare expiation is possible,
but only for men of śraddhā and believers in divinity.

47 But for the proud and malicious disbelievers
who have no śraddhā, expiation is not possible.

48 O finest of dharma-followers! O tiger-among-men!
Seekers of good now or later should emulate noble conduct.

49 You will be cleansed, O rājā; you have protected,
dutifully killed enemies, and won your inheritance.

22 How fortunate that Pāṇḍava Bhīma,
O rājā,
and the Gāṇḍīva-wielder Arjuna,
and the twin sons
of Mādri and Pāṇḍu
are well

23 And have survived the war
that wiped out
countless heroes ~ how wonderful!
O Bharata descendant!
All that remains to be done ~
do it quickly now!"

24 O Bharata descendant Janamejaya!
Thus exalted,
Dharmarāja Yudhiṣṭhira,
determined, with
his well-wishers, to accept
royal responsibility.

22 O ruler of the earth!
Four vidyās: dharma, artha, kāma, mokṣa;
Four yajñas: hotā, udgāta, brahmā, adhvaryu;
Four āśramas: brahmacarya, gṛhastha, vānaprastha,
saṁnyāsa; and everything about rāja-dharma ~
Go to him, and ask him.

23 When the formidable Kaurava sun
Bhīṣma sets,
then you will see the setting
of all knowledge ~
which is why I urge you
to go to him now."

24 To these inspiring words
of Vāsudeva-Krishna
wise-in-dharma Yudhiṣṭhira,
in a voice choked
with emotion, said to
Janārdana-Krishna:

15 Lying on his bed of arrows,
with a pure heart,
palms folded in añjali,
invoked Krishna.
He burst into ecstatic praise
of Madhusūdana-Krishna,

16 The lotus-navelled Lord of Yoga,
Viṣṇu, Jiṣṇu,
Jagat-pati Lord of the universe.
With palms folded
in añjali, incomparably eloquent,
strongest-of-the-strong

17 Bhīṣma, the supreme dharmātmā,
sang the praises
of Vāsudeva-Krishna:
"O Krishna!
This adoration in words
that I offer~

SECTION 49

1 Vāsudeva-Krishna replied:
Son of Kuntī!
Listen to what I have heard
from mahā-ṛṣis
about the birth, valour and glory
of Paraśurāma;

2 How the son of Jamadagni
massacred crores
of Kṣatriyas, and how
the dynasty
of Bharata rājās
was again revived.

3 O ruler of the earth!
Jahnu had a son named Aja.
Aja's son was Balākāśva.
Balākāśva's son was dharma-devoted Kuśika.

23 Speeding furiously, left indents
on the pliant earth
with their thudding hooves.
Mahā-powerful,
wind-swift, they seemed to gulp
the sky as they galloped,

24 And in no time at all
they reached
Kurukṣetra, the field of dharma,
at the spot
where Prabhu-lord Bhīṣma lay
on his bed of arrows.

25 Surrounded by mahā-ṛṣis,
Bhīṣma dazzled,
like Brahmā ringed by the gods.
Alighting from
their chariots, Govinda-Krishna,
Yudhiṣṭhira,

31 O finest-of-men Yudhiṣṭhira!
Despite all that,
a Brahmin should be respected.
If found guilty,
he should preferably be exiled
from the kingdom.

32 O lord of the world!
Show compassion
even to a guilty Brahmin.
Brahmin-murder,
sleeping with a guru's wife,
causing abortion,

33 Treason against a rājā ~
no Brahmin should suffer
corporal punishment for any
of these crimes;
he should be banished
from the kingdom.

6 O Indra-among-rājās!
In the distant past,
rājā Marutta sang a śloka,
approved by Bṛhaspati,
regarding the authority
of a rājā:

7 'A guru who flouts
Norms of good conduct
Through arrogant lust,
Not doing to-be-done,
Doing not-to-be-done ~
Punish him you must.'

8 Bāhu's son, the supremely wise
rājā Sāgara
banished his eldest son
named Asamañjas
because he desired the welfare
of his subjects.

48 Making plans for the security
of fortifications,
being always prepared for battle,
harassing the enemy
by encouraging the infiltration
of robbers and vandals,

49 Employing arsonists, poisoners
and professional cheats
to undermine the enemy,
and persuading
the disaffected to sow discord
in enemy ranks,

50 Spreading pollution and corruption,
undermining the ranks
of elephants, sowing terrorism,
and honouring lavishly
those in the enemy who are
well disposed toward you ...

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from the Sanskrit by P. Lāl

Volume 300

The Rāja-dharma-anuśāsana Varṇāśrama-dharma-Kathana, Caturāśrama-dharma-Kathana in the Śānti Parva ~

SECTION 60

1 Once again revering Gaṅgā's son Bhīṣma
(continued Vaiśampāyana),
and folding his palms in añjali,
Yudhiṣṭhira asked:

2 "What are the special dharmas of
the four castes, and what
are the four stages of life,
and what is rāja-dharma?

32 Saying this (continued Bhīṣma),
Prabhu-Lord
Bhagavān Viṣṇu, disguised as Indra,
surrounded by hosts
of Maruts, returned to his eternal,
imperishable realm.

33 O blameless ruler Yudhiṣṭhira!
This was the way
dharma was ideally established
in the distant past.
Why should any wise and perceptive man
reject Kṣatriya-dharma?

34 Like blind men who do not know
where they are going,
are those in this world
who cannot make out
what leads to pravṛtti-progress
and nivṛtti-regress.

47 When he provides śrī-prosperity
to some
and takes it away from others,
then the earth-lord,
O rājā Yudhiṣṭhira, becomes Kubera-
Vaiśravaṇa the god of wealth.

48 Let no man of skill, capable
of hard work,
eager to acquire dharma,
free from malice,
ever get involved in slandering
a rājā.

49 Whether a rājā's son, or brother,
or close friend,
or even one as close as
the rājā's own ātman,
he cannot find happiness by
speaking ill of the rājā.

Note

Śloka 79

The Six: Lust, Anger, Greed, Folly,
Arrogance, Envy

The Five: Hearing, Touching, Seeing,
Tasting, Smelling

The Ten: Hunting, Gambling, Day-dreaming,
Maligning, Womanising, Drinking,
Dancing, Singing, Playing
musical instruments,
and Procrastinating

The Eight: Backbiting, Bravado, Hostility,
Fault-finding, Extravagance, Jealousy,
Cruel Speech, Harsh Punishment
(all faults born of anger)

15 When Kṣatriyas and Brahmins
fall apart,
the sacred texts get neglected,
and children
do not prosper, milk
is not churned,
yajñas are not performed.
Brahmin children
stop studying sacred texts.

16 Wealth deserts the homes
of Kṣatriyas
in a kingdom where Kṣatriyas
despise Brahmins.
Their children neither study
nor perform yajñas.
They become dasyu-robbers
and indulge
in indiscriminate theft
and violence.

SECTION 75

1 "Tell me, Pitāmaha Bhīṣma,"
asked Yudhiṣṭhira,
"the ways by which a king
ensures the progress
of his people, and gains merit
for himself."

2 O Bharata descendant! (replied Bhīṣma)
Gift-giving, yajña-performance,
fasting, tapasyā, happily protecting
his subjects ~ these are the ways.

3 A rājā dedicated to dharma
who thus cares
for his subjects should stand up
when welcoming and
pūjā-respecting dharma-rich citizens,
and give them gifts.

22 Gifted with remarkable intelligence
and sharp memory,
skilled and naturally not given
to harming others,
not unduly roused by praise
or denigration, ~

23 Such a person is ideally suited
to be your ṛtvik,
ācārya, and loved-and-loving
sakhā-friend,
and stay in your house, and receive
your pūjā-respect.

24 Only such a person can be
allowed access
to your secret plans of
dharma-and-artha;
you can trust him like a son
trusting a father.

42 Your kingdom is a hotbed
of impenetrable gloom.
Absolute darkness.
You yourself are not
safe in it.
What safety have I?

43 No one is safe here,
no one secure.
Believe me, you may be good,
you may be bad ~
either way, in this Kingdom
you are doomed.

44 Justice says: Punish the wicked,
never the good.
Anyone with even
a little commonsense
will leave this Kingdom
as soon as he can.

45 A king who wishes to rule
with the power to punish
should reveal his plans
only to that person
who can firmly persuade
and convince others.

46 Only that person is entitled
to the trust of the king
who is himself trusted
by citizens for his dharma,
who is brave and courageous
and his insight into policy.

47 Let a king have at least
three such ministers ~
who have all the guṇas,
who deserve pūjā-respect,
who, knowing what is what,
seek mahā-greatness.

18 That is why imposing a tax
is a matter
that needs careful consideration.
Thirsting for more
will uproot the king
along with his subjects.

19 He should close the door
of his greed
if he wishes to be popular.
A rājā who overreaches
will only succeed in gaining
dilike and disfavour.

20 How can a person
who is disliked
find true success?
A clear-thinking king
should remember the calf example
before milking his kingdom.

37 The summer months are cold,
and winter months
far from cold. Untimely rain,
excessive heat,
and disease and pestilence
harass the populace.

38 Comets streak in the sky,
ominous planets
become prominent;
other signs too
herald the downfall
of the rājā.

39 How can a king protect himself
if he fails
to protect his people?
First his subjects
decline; then the rājā
himself is doomed.

2 If a King is himself unsure
and insecure,
let him not annex new kingdoms
A weak rājā
does not become strong by adding
more territories.

3 Only that king is firm-rooted
whose land
is overflowing with prosperity,
whose subjects
are loyal, whose officials
are healthy and happy.

4 If the soldiers of a king
are contented,
and expert in duping his enemies,
he will be able
to subjugate the entire world
with a very small army.

60 Warrior's bones its pebbles and stones, bleeding
flesh its hard-to-cross slime, swords and shields
its boats, human hair its moss and weeds;

61 Corpses of horses and elephants, and shattered
chariots its huge stepping stones; pennants
and war-flags its inter-twining reeds;
a river floating with elephant carcases;

62 A river difficult for humans to ferry
across to the other shore; elephants the
mahā-crocodiles of this other-world river;

63 Plain swords and double-edged ṛṣṭi-swords
its boats, vultures and ravens its rafts;
a river traumatising weaklings and cowards;

64 According to smṛti, a river that is the final
purifying bath of a warrior. A warrior
who heaps the vedī-altar with heads of foes,

2 Weapons and vehicles (replied Bhīṣma) are made following already prepared designs. The behaviour of brave men also is patterned on traditional lines.

3 Gāndhāras, Sindhus, and Sauvīras fight with nakhara-claws and prāsa-spears; they are strong and fearless; they stand out prominently as warriors.

4 Strong also and well-versed in war-weapons are the Uśīnaras. Easterners are brilliant elephant-warriors ~ and brilliant in deceptions.

5 The Yavanas, Kāmbojas and dwellers in the region of Mathurā are brilliant in hand-to-hand combat. The Southerners are fine swordsmen.

6 It goes without saying that mahā-powerful and mahā-courageous men can be found in every country. I have given you the broad idea. Now let me come to the specifics.

23 Surottama Śakra-Indra! O finest of the gods! Gentleness, harshness, laziness, carelessness, and multi-māyā-deceptions are the bane of kings who do not know how to discriminate.

24 If these four are overcome, and māyā-deceptions seen through, a king can safely and with confidence attack his enemy.

25 If a king can keep a secret, it is best he keep it to one man. Ministers are known to give out secrets; or discuss them freely among themselves.

26 Let him say, 'This is impossible,' and then let him involve others to make it possible. Let him use Brahmā-daṇḍa divine punishment against invisible enemies by invoking the aid of priests, and employ his four-fold army might against visible enemies within the reach of military chastisement.

25 All these are time-tested techniques of fraud and deception. A competent man can make good use of these to exterminate enemies.

SECTION 106

1 The rājā said: "Brahmin, I have no desire to use fraud and wickedness in my life. I will not resort to adharma even if it leads me to vast wealth.

2 Bhagavan! Revered one! I have avoided all deeds till now that will make people doubt my goodness. I have always sought the welfare of others.

3 I want to live in this world by practising the dharma of never harming others. I cannot do what you tell me, and it does not become you to give me such advice."

Notes

Śloka 7 in SECTION 109:

Balāka: The reference is to the Karṇa Parva, SECTION 69. A monster attained special power by practising tapasyā. Yet Brahmā, who gave him that power, praised and rewarded with heaven a forester who killed the monster who had started indiscriminately killing other creatures.

Kauśika: Also from the same section in the Karṇa Parva. Kauśika is a truth-speaking Brahmin who goes to hell because he informs pursuers which road their would-be victims had taken, even though the victims were thieves who were running away with the pursuers' goods.

35 But let me say this: If the Indra-of-beasts still wants me, I am ready, but on one condition, which is about how you must treat me.

36 You must listen to whatever I say, because I wish you well. You must promise me ~ and you must keep your promise, to the letter.

37 I will never seek advice from your other ministers. They are far too clever in statecraft, and they will start making insinuations against me; I know this.

38 I will always meet you alone, one to one, and tell you what is good for you. You will not discuss the affairs of your ministers with me.

39 Also, after our talks together, no matter what, you will not take action against any minister. And, even if angry, you will not punish me."

The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

TRANSCREATOR'S NOTES

SECTION 115 śloka 22:

Śaṅkha and Likhita:

दृश्यते शङ्खलिखितः स धर्मफलभाङ् नृपः।

The first mention of Śaṅkha and Likhita in the Mahābhārata is their presence at Indra's sabhā described by Nārada to Yudhiṣṭhira [II:7:11]. Śaṅkha, a Brahmin, insists that his guilty brother Likhita be punished, and not claim from the king immunity because he is a Brahmin.

śloka 23: The six-fold policy is:

1) treaty-making 2) attacking

3) sowing discord 4) patience

5) diplomacy 6) conciliation

33 The fruits of a kingdom belong to the king who wishes everyone's welfare, who is dedicated to progress, and has friends to help him.

34 O Bharata! A king who is able to attract competent men needs no more than a thousand brave horsemen to conquer this earth.

SECTION 119

1 The lesson to learn (continued Bhīṣma) is that a lord of men will be able to enjoy the fruits of ruling a kingdom if he appoints responsible and accountable officers, who are not like the dog.

2 The dog became obsessed with ideas above his station, and fell into disfavour. He became a victim of pride. A dog should be put in his place.

27 He made the thousand-eyed divinity, Daśaśatekṣaṇa Indra the sole lord of the gods, and Vaivasvata Yama the lord of the pitṛs.

28 Kubera became the lord of wealth and rākṣasas, Meru of mountains, and the mahā-ocean of rivers.

29 Prabhu-lord Varuṇa was given dominion over the waters and antigods, Death over prāṇa-life-breaths, and Hutāśana-Agni the carrier of oblations over tejasa-radiances.

30 Large-eyed, eternal, mahātmā Mahādeva became the lord and protector of all the Rudras.

31 Vasiṣṭha became the lord of Brahmins, Jātaveda-Agni of Vasus, Bhāskara the sun of dazzling energies, the Moon of nakṣatra-planets.

18 "What is this thing character, which is known as śīla," asked Duryodhana, "with which the kings so easily acquired the earth? Tell me, O Bharata."

19 Dhṛtarāṣtra replied: "There is in this connection, O Bharata descendant, an ancient historical story narrated by Nārada concerning character.

20 With the help of character, the Daitya antigod Prahlāda took possession of mahātmā Mahendra-Indra's kingdom and the three worlds as well.

21 So Śakra-Indra, in his mahā-wisdom, with palms joined in añjali, approached Bṛhaspati and said, "What is best for me now?"

22 O enhancer and perpetuator of the glory of the Kauravas! Bṛhaspati informed him that the supreme prosperity was knowledge. So Bhagavān Bṛhaspati enlightened Devendra-Indra.

6 I refuse to be silly. I will be firm in my tapasyā." Virabhadra once again questioned that finest of all munis:

7 "Bhagavān! You know all about dharma and artha. How can one reduce one's hopes? Is anything more difficult than that?

8 Recalling the past incidents, the bhagavān ṛṣi with the long-and-lean body reminded the rājā of what had happened.

9 "O king," said the ṛṣi, "nothing is more difficult than reducing hope. Precisely because this is so, I have approached many kings and verified that it is so."

10 "Brahmin," said the rājā, "I see now how difficult it is to reduce or not-reduce hope. I accept it as a truth of the very Vedas itself.

[XII:131:4-8] **The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa** 15

4 Bhīṣma replied: If the invading conqueror respects dharma and artha, and is straightforward, then peace terms should be swiftly agreed upon, and the invader persuaded to relinquish the occupied territories.

5 If the invader follows adharma and is wicked-minded, make peace with him swiftly, and surrender to him the territories he has occupied, a part of them.

6 If he refuses to make peace, abandon your capital and escape with your life, in the hope that some day you will recover your lost territories.

7 Treasury and army are dispensable in a crisis. Which man will not prefer to escape with his life if he knows anything at all about dharma and artha?

8 If the palace ladies cannot be protected and fall in the enemy's hands, waste no tender feelings over them. Above all is the safety of your own person.

19 And the man who thinks himself to be very clever and waits for things to happen exposes himself to grave danger, like the I-am-prepared-for-the-present fish.

20 Only the future planner and the cool-headed present tackler ~ these two ~ find success and happiness. The procrastinator is doomed.

21 Kāṣṭhās, kalās, muhūrtas, days, nights, lavas, months, pakṣas, the six seasons, kalpas, saṁvatsaras ~

22 These divisions of time make up Kāla, and deśa or earth is the place of Kāla. Kāla is invisible. Invisible too are plans and decisions.

23 The ṛṣis stress deśa and Kāla, place and time, in all śāstras of dharma, artha, and mokṣa. They are basic to succeeding in kāma as well.

68 Terrible is my plight. Your plight is no less. We must get together and save ourselves. There is no time to waste.

69 Vibho! O radiant one! Whatever you want me to do, I will certainly do. Your good deed will not go in vain. I will amply recompense you.

70 Gone is my pride! I am your bhakta, I am your disciple. I will serve you, I will obey you. I will always seek your grace."

71 Hearing this pledge of the cat, who was now completely under his influence, Palita came out with some brilliant words of great benefit:

72 "What a noble mind you have! Exactly what I expected from a discerning person. Listen to the plan I have for our mutual benefit.

177 It's safest to fear a powerful and wicked person, even when he professes peace. Tell me what you would like me to do for you ~ but see that it has nothing to do with your self-interest.

178 I'll give you anything, but you can't have me. To protect oneself, everything can be sacrificed: children, kingdom, jewels, wealth.

179 Give up everything, but don't give up yourself. From the clutches of one's enemies, power, wealth, jewels ~

180 Everything can be retrieved, so long as one is alive to do so. This I have heard. It is utterly stupid to surrender one's life like wealth.

181 Why just wealth? ~ Even one's wife can be sacrificed to save one's life. A man who thinks before he acts and knows how to protect himself

62 All are in love with life, all are in love with their sons. All shun grief, all desire happiness.

63 There are many kinds of grief, Brahmadatta. Old age is grief, to be poor is grief, living with a person you don't like is grief, and separation from people you like is grief.

64 Injury and imprisonment cause grief. Even a woman can cause grief. So can a lost son, or a dissolute son.

65 Some fools say other people's grief does not affect them; it is not their grief. But great men know this is not true. Grief affects all.

66 How can anyone who has experienced grief say such a thing? The feeling man feels the griefs of others as poignantly as his own.

66 With gentleness you can destroy a gentle person, with gentleness you can destroy a fierce person. There is nothing that gentleness cannot accomplish. In fact, there is nothing more effective than gentleness.

67 The king who is gentle when gentleness is required, and harsh when fierceness is required, achieves what he wants, and succeeds in overcoming his enemies.

68 It does not help saying, 'I'll keep a safe distance from him', if you incur the enmity of a clever paṇḍit. The reach of such a person is long, and he can cause you great harm.

69 Don't jump into a river you cannot swim across. Don't try to uproot an un-uprootable tree. Don't take anything that can be taken back from you. Don't attack an enemy whose head you cannot cut off.

63 A man who is dying of hunger should save himself by any means he can. After saving himself, he can attend to dharma.

64 The dharma of Indra is the dharma of Kṣatriyas, the dharma of Agni is the dharma of Brahmins. Brahma-fire is my strength; when famished, I will eat whatever I like.

65 No need to think twice when it comes to saving one's life. Better to live than to die ~ only the living practise dharma, not the dead.

66 I will eat forbidden food because I prefer life to death. My mind is made up. Take it any way you like.

67 The way the stars scatter darkness with light, I will dispel all my inauspiciousness with the power of my tapasyā and my knowledge."

SECTION 144

1 Bhīṣma continued: Now, living in the branches of that tree, O rājā, was a lovely-feathered pigeon, along with his friends.

2 His wife had gone out early in the morning searching for food, and it was late night now, and she had not yet returned. Her husband was sorely anxious.

3 "What a terrible storm! And what a deluge of rain! And my dear wife is not back yet! What can be the reason for her delay?

4 O my beloved wife! What can be keeping you back in this forest? I feel so lost and lonely without you. Empty is my nest without you.

12 The bird-hunter rushed straight towards the consuming conflagration. He entered it, O excellent Bharata, and that very instant, defects destroyed in the forest-fire, purified in the flames, the hunter attained the supreme perfection.

13 Then, suddenly, he was rid of his fever of disquiet, and he found himself in a happy heaven, radiant like Indra surrounded by yakṣas, gandharvas and perfected siddhas.

14 And that was how the pigeon, the husband-devoted pativratā pigeon's wife, and the bird-hunter — all three attained heaven by the strength of their pious karma.

15 Like the she-pigeon, a woman who follows her husband attains heaven speedily, and shines there like the radiant bird.

82 Who is thoroughly dead and gone ~ how are your tears of any use to him?" With burning grief in their hearts, and tears flooding their eyes, the family members placed the boy's corpse on the ground, and made their way back, after listening to the words of the vulture.

83 The jackal exclaimed: "This world of human beings ~ what a horrible world! All die, everything breaks up, relatives part, life is short.

84 Look at all the accusing and the lying, the bitterness and unpleasantness. All that goes on here only adds to grief and agony.

85 Not even for the briefest moment do I find any pleasure in it. Aho! Dhik! Shame on you! You fools, duped by the vulture's words,

SECTION 157

1 Bhīṣma continued: With this thought in mind, Śālmali, compelled to do so, divested himself of his branches, big and small, and lopped off all his leaves.

2 Shorn of all his branches, leafy shoots and flowers, the lordly tree stood there, waiting for the morning and Wind to make their appearance.

3 Uprooting mahā-trees as he rushed to keep his word, Wind sped through the forest, and stood in front of Śālmali.

4 He saw the tree bereft of branches and leaves and flowers, and he was overjoyed. He looked at the once-so-luxuriant Śālmali and smiled and said:

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29 What wonderful radiant everlasting worlds there are, O rājā, for the person who leaves his home and devotes himself to mokṣa-liberation.

30 Renouncing karma, renouncing ritual practices, renouncing the vivid variety of academic learning, renouncing all this,

31 Purifying his kāma, and never looking back, that serene-ātmaned person gains deep respect in this life, and heaven in the next.

32 The realm of Brahmā Pitāmaha, the total experience of Brahman, is hidden in the cave of the heart, and can only be attained by self-control.

33 He does not fear rebirth in this world ~ the enlightened delighter in knowledge, who has no hostility for anyone ~ why should he fear the next world?

19 No rājā can withstand the radiant energy of a Brahman-knowing Brahmin. Creator, ordainer, preserver, a deva-deity is a Brahmin ~ so they say.

20 Nothing inauspicious, nothing bitter is to be said to a Brahmin. They overcome crisis and calamity ~ a Kṣatriya by sheer physical strength,

21 A Vaiśya and a Śūdra by the power of money, and a Brahmin by mantras and homas. An 8-year-old kanyā-virgin, a 14-year-old yuvatī-virgin, a mantra-ignorant man, a childish adult,

22 And a saṁskāra-less uninitiated person are not entitled to perform the agnihotṛ. They fall into hell if they do. Only a learned-in-the-Vedas man is competent for this ritual. Hell also awaits the man for whom it is performed.

23 Those with dharma-darshan declare null and void the ritual that does not give as dakṣiṇā the Prajāpati-dedicated horse.

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The Mahābhārata of Vyāsa

Transcreated from the Sanskrit by P. Lāl

Volume 336

The Āpad-dharma-parvaṇi Kaṅgotpatti-kathane in the Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata

SECTION 166

1 After the end of this discourse, Nakula approached Bhīṣma lying on his bed of arrows. That absolutely expert swordsman said to the Pitāmaha: (continued Vaiśampāyana)

2 "O wise-in-dharma Pitāmaha! Everybody speaks of the bow as the best of war-weapons. In my opinion, however, the finest war-weapon is a finely sharpened sword.

COMMUNICATION

[This letter was sent to the Editor of the weekly newsmagazine *Outlook*, as a comment on an interview with Dr. Amartya Sen that appeared in October 2009. The letter was not printed in the magazine.]

Amartya Sen, Gandhiji and the Gītā

Dear Sir,

Surely Dr. Amartya Sen is being over-argumentative – and perhaps a little simplistic – when he suspects non-violent Gandhiji to be "peculiar" because, according to Dr. Sen, Gandhiji takes the side of Krishna "who makes Arjuna fight a war and kill people." Many, including imperfect-knowledged me, thought similarly; and many still do. I changed only after transcreating into English the entire *Mahābhārata* śloka-by-śloka during a 30 year obsession with Vyāsa.

Three quick points.

1. From a close study of the *Gītā* and Vyāsa's epic, it seems that Krishna does nothing of the kind. The important fact is that he warns Arjuna that he will not fight for Arjuna. He will only advise; he will give various opinions, he will clarify the crisis. The karma is Arjuna's; the victory or defeat will be Arjuna's. Krishna warns about the dangers of war and describes the possible glories of war for those who go into battle. In Canto 18 of the *Gītā*, Krishna emphatically says: "I give you this profound wisdom. Think it over very carefully. *Yathecchasi tathā kuru:* You are free to choose." In other words: "Don't pass the buck, Arjuna. You want revenge for the insult to Draupadī and you want the kingdom. On your head be it." Why Bhīma, Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna ignore the saner options and choose crooked wisdom instead to kill Duryodhana, Droṇa, Bhīṣma and Karṇa, is their problem, not Krishna's. They did not have to follow Krishna's advice– why did they not say, "No, thank you"?

Transcreated by P. Lal

2. Rightly or wrongly, Gandhiji preferred Rāma to Krishna. Naturally: the relish of gopis dancing in moonlit rāsa-lila and the horrors of the Kurukṣetra carnage could not have appealed much to the Father of our Nation. He died, sighing, "Hē Rāma!" In fact, Gandhiji interpreted the *Gītā* symbolically. Krishna is Arjuna's conscience. Everything happens in the Kurukṣetra mind-battlefield of Arjuna. In simple language, good and evil clash on the eve of the great 18 day battle in the mind of the Kṣatriya warrior who has the invincible Gāṇḍīva bow but refuses to fight because he is morally confused. It's Arjuna's personal dilemma, not a gargantuan 18 day historical holocaust. Indeed, Vyāsa says unequivocally that not a single soldier of the Kaurava 11 *akṣauhiṇī* army and the Pāṇḍava 7 *akṣauhiṇī* saw the *visva-rūpa-darśaṇa*, the cosmic multi-revelation of Krishna's divinity; not one soldier heard the *Gītā*. So what happened? An inner moral conflict of a conscience-stricken Pandava named Arjuna.

3. Arjuna and Krishna are always spoken of as two individuals. The truth is that they are not two people. They are always represented in icon form as Nara-Nārāyaṇa, Jiṣṇu-Viṣṇu, Flesh-Spirit, Material-Spiritual, selfish ego and selfless reasoning, one body with two heads. The key idea is the use of reason as the basis of moral and spiritual growth. That is why the idea of justice is so important in the *Gītā* concept of dharma. The last śloka (śloka 700, or 701 in some recensions) uses the same word that Dr. Amartya Sen does – it is, in fact, the third concluding word of the *Gītā*: nyāya (administered law, justice). Śloka 78 of Canto 18 says: "Where justice is, Krishna is." When Dr Sen says: "Krishna is clearly a *niti* person," or one who recommends traditional justice, he seems to be making a considerably erroneous statement. Krishna is merely the conscience of every individual. It is karma which dispenses inevitable and inescapable justice. The bitter or sweet fruits of karma are not Krishna's, they are Arjuna's. My charioteer-chauffeur is in my pay – he knows the roads well, and he can give me all the safe and unsafe inputs. But he will have to take me where I order him. This world is mine, not God's. That is why Tagore spoke of the "Religion of Man." God, bless Him, alas, is secondary in the Hindu tradition.

– P. Lal
Kolkata

"THE CUP IS DASHED FROM HIS LIPS, HE'S BROUGHT TO WRECK AND RUIN IN HIS PRIDE"

Pradip Bhattacharya

> A man has dreams of walking with giants;
> To carve his niche in the edifice of time.
> Before the mortar of his zeal has a chance to congeal,
> The cup is dashed from his lips, the flame is snuffed aborning.
> He's brought to wreck and ruin in his pride.
>
> – George Banks, *Mary Poppins*

The Complete Shalya Parva of Vyasa's Mahabharata transcreated from the Sanskrit into English by Padma Shri P. Lal, WRITERS WORKSHOP, 700 pages, Rs.1000 hardback, Rs.600 flexiback; special edition with original hand-painted Orissa Pata-chitra Rs.1500.

Pitamaha Bhishma suspended on a bed of arrows; guru Drona beheaded; son Lakshmana slain, hero-brother Duhshasana's breast ripped open– none struck Duryodhana so much to the heart as did the death of Karna. Always keen that Karna lead the army, he had had to settle for ancient Bhishma and old Drona, ever anxious about their divided loyalties. With Karna in charge, victory seemed within his grasp. But, as Erasmus wrote in Adagia (1.5.1), *multa cadunt inter calicem supremaque labra* ("many things fall between the cup and the last lips"). It is with Duryodhana's anguish over Karna's death that the Shalya Parva begins. For the first time we hear of fear in the context of Duryodhana who, Vaishampayana tells Janamejaya, "fled terrified" after Shalya's death and hid in a lake. Similarly, we find that Dhrishtadyumna trembles with fear seeing Shalva's huge elephant charging him. The morning after the deaths of Shalya (after fighting for half a day), Duryodhana and the sleeping Panchalas (the Pandava sons are not mentioned in Vaishampayana's summary) Sanjaya reports to Hastinapura that

"In this world caught
in the clutches of Kala,
only the women are left–
and seven from the side
of the Pandavas, and three
of your chariot-heroes. (1.35)"

There is a clear decline in the prowess of the successive Kaurava commanders-in-chief that is reflected in each leading the army for half his predecessor's term. Shalya hardly qualifies to stand with them, being devoid of superhuman qualities and prone to seduction by luxury. That is why S.L. Bhyrappa's epic novel *Parva*, daringly beginning with Shalya, deserves acclaim all the more. After Karna's death when Duryodhana turns to Ashvatthama, Vyasa paints such a heroic picture of Drona's son that we are led to presume that he will be next commander. Instead, he advises that since Shalya left his nephews to join their enemies, he should command the army. Actually, like Bhishma and Drona, Shalya has been serving Pandava interests by discouraging Karna and directing his fury away from his nephews. Thus from inception Duryodhana has continuously been betrayed. Even his most trusted general Karna did not kill a single Pandava because of his vow to Kunti despite having four of them in his grasp.

This last of the battle-books falls into three parts: the death of Shalya; the pilgrimage of Balarama covering 35 tirthas; and the death of Duryodhana. Section 2 contains the deeply moving lament of the blind king: "O my son! Come to me! Come to me, O maha-muscled Indra-among-rajas! I am helpless! What will happen to me without you?...I am a wingless bird." He recounts Duryodhana's enumeration of allies outnumbering the Pandavas and his supreme confidence that should everything fail, Karna was the final answer. That is why, Dhritarashtra admits, he went along with his son's decision. He then attributes his plight to ill-luck in a lament of 17 verses, and wishes to retire to the forest rather than listen to Bhima's bitter words. He repeats this in the Stri Parva but bears precisely this humiliation for many years. Blindness and perception alternate in him. He will not take responsibility for his actions: "Fooled by fate I rejected his (Vidura's) words." Yet he also says, "There are fools in this world who have eyes but do not see. You see one such fool in front of you." His lament contains an interesting contradiction. First he wonders how a jackal like Shikhandi

could lay leonine Bhishma low; 27 verses later he says Arjuna killed Bhishma.

There are fascinating variations following Shalya's investiture in the 12th century Indonesian Kakawin, *Bharatayuddha*: Ashvatthama storms off the field, refusing to fight under Shalya's command, holding him responsible for Karna's death– surely a very logical development. On Krishna's advice, Nakula visits Shalya who tells him of Pashupati's decree that he can only be slain by Yudhishthira. Shalya spends the night with his wife Satyavati, stealing off at dawn, cutting off with his sword the part of his cloth on which she lies asleep (inspired undoubtedly by Nala-Damayanti). She seeks out his body and stabs herself, as does her maid.

It is interesting to see how Bhima responds to an infantry attack. He jumps down from his chariot for hand-to-hand combat. Arjuna never fights except from his chariot. After Karna's death and again after Shalya's, Duryodhana strains to rally his fleeing soldiers (sections 3 and 19) in identical words. In the first instance, Kripa advises him to make peace. Duryodhana refuses and cites the reasons: he tricked Yudhishthira out of his kingdom and so will never be trusted; he tricked Krishna too during his visit, nor will he forget the treatment of Draupadi and the killing of Abhimanyu; Arjuna burns over Abhimanyu's murder; Bhima will not forget his terrible vow; the twins and Drupada's sons hate him; the Pandavas cannot forget how menstruating Draupadi was abused and stripped in public. Finally, "How can I shuffle behind Yudhishthira like a cowering slave?" He then sums up his glorious achievements, which he will repeat after he has been struck down, and decides to fight to the death. For the night of Karna's death they retreat to the banks of the Sarasvati, "the river of dawn-pink waters", at the Himalayan foothills. This is where Shalya, son of Ritayana, is appointed commander.

Krishna now adopts a curious stance. He extols Shalya's prowess above everyone's and tells Yudhishthira that none but he can face him. But the truth is soon out. Till now, the eldest Pandava has no feat of war to his credit. The conquering monarch needs to show the army his worth, at least one major kill is required. Therefore, Krishna urges him, "You have survived the ocean of Drona and Bhishma, the sea of Karna. Shalya is a water-hole the size of a cow's hoof print. Don't drown in it." He responds, "Only my share of valour remains" (16.18), recalling at 17.40 that

Shalya is his allotted share. In the Udyoga Parva (section 57) each Pandava chose his "share". Finally, only handsome Nakula is left with no major kill to his credit as his "share". Uluka is dispatched by Sahadeva in addition to his own, Shakuni. There is a deliberate effort by the poet to build up Yudhishthira's skills at arms, specially with the shakti-spear, comparing him with Skanda.

Shalya adopts a new strategy: no warrior will face the Pandavas singly; all will fight collectively as one. Even after his death, there is no let up and Shakuni decimates the Pandava cavalry. At this point Vyasa introduces a sudden lowering of pitch and change of tone. Arjuna addresses Krishna, puzzled at the unremitting bloodshed even after Bhishma's fall: "I do not know why,/but the war went on/and on and on." (24.21). This becomes the recurring refrain in this plangent passage of 30 verses on the meaninglessness of war. It is only now that Arjuna realises the truth of Vidura's warning that, come what may, Duryodhana will never share the kingdom and therefore war is the only way to defeat him.

Sanjaya cannot remain a mere spectator as the Kaurava army is decimated. On this last day, he joins four other warriors fighting alongside Kripa against the Panchala army (25.52). Routed by Dhrishtadyumna, he flees, is knocked unconscious by Satyaki and taken prisoner. Satyaki is about to behead him when Vyasa materialises and grants Sanjaya immunity. Laying aside his weapons, bleeding all over, that 18th evening Sanjaya leaves for Hastinapura. En route he is appalled to see Duryodhana grievously wounded, "All alone. No soldier. No vehicle…standing all alone on five footsteps of land…Such a Jagannatha reduced to such misfortune". Duryodhana's eyes fill; he cannot speak, nor look straight at him. It is from Sanjaya that Kripa, Ashvatthama and Kritavarma get to know that Duryodhana is hiding within a lake. Yuyutsu comes into his own now, escorting the wives of the slain into Hastinapura, winning high praise from Vidura. But all the praise brings him no peace, no delight in the palace, "No joy here, no glory, no solace. Desolate like a forsaken garden (29.111)".

Duryodhana's reply to Yudhishthira's challenge is in prophetic words: "I give this empty earth to you. She is all yours. Which raja wants a kingdom with no one in it?...enjoy this husband-less earth without wealth and warriors. Be happy with this pathetic, life-less girl" (31.48, 53). Ironically, later the victor will repeat these very sentiments and wish to abdicate. At this moment, for once Yudhishthira refuses to compromise because "If you live,/ and I

live,/ the world will be confused: Who won the war?...Stand up!/ And fight! (31.68, 73)." But then once again he displays his complete lack of good sense, promising Duryodhana the kingdom should he kill any of the Pandavas. Krishna administers a sound tongue-lashing for his inveterate gambling instinct that, with just a single enemy left, stakes the kingdom in a perilous wager against one who cannot be defeated in a fair fight. Exasperated, Krishna exclaims, "Pandu's and Kunti's children/don't deserve the kingdom. They were born to live/in forest-exile,/and go about as beggars (33.16-17)." Duryodhana has been practising with the mace for 13 years, while Bhima is out of practice. Krishna reminds Bhima to be true to his vow and smash his thighs. In the challenge Bhima roars out there is a very interesting detail in verse 49 where, while enumerating all those dead because of Duryodhana's wickedness, he suddenly mentions that the sinful Pratikamin who made Draupadi suffer is also dead. This attendant merely carried Duryodhana's insulting summons to her, so the reference is a puzzle-unless he is using it as an epithet for Duhshasana.

As the duel is about to begin, Vyasa deliberately lowers the tension by having Balarama stride in, back from the pilgrimage that he started 42 days ago just before the war began. If he has returned after 42 days, how has the battle lasted for only 18 days? This has led to Vasudev Poddar's thesis that the battle was not continuous but had intervals. Here and at two other places in *Shalya Parva* astronomical data appear that have been used to hazard dating the war. Janamejaya, in no hurry to have the story end, presses Vaishampayana to narrate the 43 pilgrim spots Balarama visited. By the time this ends, the audience's frazzled nerves are relaxed, refreshed and prepared for the gory violence of the climactic battle.

Vyasa paints a lovely word-portrait of Narada in 54.18-20 as he comes to meet Balarama, ending with the wry comment: *prakartā kalahānāñca nityañca kalahapriya*– "He loved provoking people./He was a mischief maker." Balarama's pilgrimage is an adjunct to the elaborate itinerary of 350 holy fords that Lomasha guides the Pandavas through in the *Vana Parva.* Balarama's includes two spots giving contradictory messages. Section 52 celebrates sage Kunigarga's aged daughter who cannot attain heaven until she gets married. Just a section later, section 54 immortalises Shandilya's daughter who gains svarga by remaining celibate. The plurality of the Indian tradition that embraces

opposites so felicitously is eminently in evidence. By this time the river Sarasvati has already got lost at Vinasana because of tectonic upheavals hinted at in the myth of Dhundhumara. The river has seven names: Suprabha at Pushkara, Kanchanakshi at Naimisha, Vishala at Gaya, Manorama in north Kosala, Surenu and Oghavati at Kurukshetra and Gangadvara, Vimaloda in the Himalayas where the seven mingle at the Sarasvati-tirtha. In its waters spilled the semen of sage Mankanaka on seeing a naked girl bathing. Put in a pot, it produced 7 sages from whom sprang the forty-nine Marut wind-gods. So here we not only have a myth paralleling the birth of Drona, but a variation on the origin of the Maruts who are otherwise the children of Diti cut up by Indra into 49 parts.

Here we learn of a new cause of the destruction of Dhritarashtra's kingdom: sage Baka's destructive sacrifice when the king gave him animal carcasses instead of cattle. Two episodes in the Vashishtha-Vishvamitra conflict are described in connection with two tirthas. In the story of the Aruna tirtha the hint is given that following a Rajasuya sacrifice (the first being performed by Soma) there is invariably a horrific war (Soma's was followed by the war against Taraka). This was the fate of Yudhishthira's Rajasuya too. The birth and feats of Skanda form an important part of the account of pilgrimages. Among his attendants is the goblin Ghantakarna, an important figure Krishna meets during his tapasya to obtain a son. Skanda's investiture is imitated later for Durga, as also the fearsome mother goddesses in his retinue and his killing the demon Mahisha.

The reason for the special holiness of Kurukshetra is revealed here. Eager to stop the inveterate tilling of the field by Kuru, Indra agreed that whoever died here by fasting and in battle would reach heaven. It lies between Tarantuka, Arantuka, Ramahrda and Machakurka, is also known as Samantapanchaka. Hence the choice of the battlefield by the Dhartarashtras and Pandavas.

As the duel proceeds, Krishna tells Arjuna that Bhima will lose if he fights righteously. We recall the parallel episode of how Jarasandha was killed. The predicament is all Yudhishthira's fault. Krishna quotes from the lost treatise on governance by Ushana-Shukra which has been splendidly transcreated in gnomic verse: "If an enemy routed/an enemy fled,/returns to fight you,/be filled with dread,/for his sole aim/is to see you dead" (58.15). Krishna, like a seasoned bureaucrat, quotes the precedents of Indra taking

recourse to deception to destroy Virochana and Vritra (and, we may add, Namuchi, Trishira). To precedent he adds, as further justification, Bhima's obligation to keep his oath. Once Duryodhana is down, Bhima proclaims the successful avenging of Draupadi's molestation, attributing the victory to "the strength of the tapasya of Yajnaseni" and shrugs off all criticism with "If this takes us to heaven,/or takes us to hell–/what do we care?" He then kicks fallen Duryodhana's head to the disapproval of all and is rebuked by Yudhishthira who tearfully attempts a closure by echoing Duryodhana's own prophecy: "It's we who/should be mourning;/We must pass our days now/without all/who were near and dear to us...You alone are the happy one,/heaven truly is yours./we will suffer a fearful hell/on earth... (59.27-30)." Balarama, of course, is furious and rushes with upraised plough to kill Bhima. Krishna grips him in his arms and the inimitable poet in Vyasa seizes on the occasion to paint a lovely portrait: "The two Yadava brothers,/one dark, the other fair,/shone like sun and moon at day-end,/like white Kailasa/beside a black mountain." Krishna advances several justifications: imagine Kali Yuga has set in; Bhima had to fulfil his vow; Bhima has destroyed a disgrace to the family; Duryodhana was air-borne and not on the ground when Bhima hit his thighs. Vyasa, however, does not scruple in recording that Balarama was "displeased with the crooked dharma of Keshava". Through his lips Vyasa also heralds closure to the theme of war as a ritual sacrifice in which Duryodhana took initiation, offered up his life as oblation and attained glory completing the yajna.

Krishna reprimands Yudhishthira for not interfering when Bhima was stamping on Duryodhana's head. Yudhishthira explains that knowing Bhima's deep grudge he looked the other way, as did Arjuna though neither liked what he had done. These verses conflict with what has gone before, where Bhima was promptly rebuked. Either of the set is a later addition. Yudhishthira now tells Bhima that his debt to mother Kunti and to his own wrath has been discharged.

Duryodhana, roused to fury by the adulation offered to Bhima by all and their insults about him now rears up "like an angry venomous snake/with its tail sliced in half...in excruciating pain" to abuse Krishna, enumerating the many tricks he played to defeat the Kauravas. Later, to Sanjaya he exclaims, "How does it profit/ a good man/to win by wicked means?" (64.13) Krishna spares no

words in hitting back with a list of Duryodhana's crimes for which he is now paying. Duryodhana's last words are majestic indeed, repeating much of what he said before the duel: "I have studied, given gifts,/ruled the sea-girt earth,/Placed my foot on the heads/ of my enemies…I have achieved the peak of power./Who is there more fortunate than me? O Achyuta-Krishna,/I go to heaven/ with my friends and followers,/And all of you stay back here/ with grieving minds/and shattered hearts." There is no reason to brand Vyasa pro-Pandava, as western indologists tend to. In sections 33, 54 and here in 61 he records the applause greeting Duryodhana's responses. Krishna and the Pandavas are dismayed and ashamed to find his speech greeted with a shower of celestial flowers and music. To raise their spirits, in a booming voice Krishna justifies his use of trickery for ensuring their victory. Later, Duryodhana, in his speech to Sanjaya, wanders into make-believe, claiming that he never won by unfair means, never poisoned anyone or killed a sleeping enemy, drawing a convenient veil over Varanavata, Pramankoti and Abhimanyu's murder. He hopes that the wandering mendicant Charvaka, expert orator, will avenge his death. That attempt is, indeed, made later. When the three surviving heroes of his army meet him, Duryodhana states that though he grants Krishna's glory, it never blinded him. This is why Bankimchandra argued that in the epic Krishna is not portrayed as God but as a human being of outstanding capabilities.

Regarding Duryodhana's right to the throne, there is at least one confirmed belief in ancient India that his claim was valid. In chapter 6 (Restraint of the organs of the sense-the shaking off of the aggregate of the Six Enemies) in Book-1 of the *Arthashashtra*, Chanakya cites the example of Duryodhana as follows–

"Rávana unwilling under the influence of vanity to restore a stranger's wife, as well as Duryodhana to part with a portion of his kingdom; Dambhodbhava as well as Arjuna of Haihaya dynasty being so haughty as to despise all people (all perished)."

It is clear Duryodhana fell due to 'maanaad' (pride or vanity), and not because of his "illegal claim" to the throne. In other words, Duryodhana's claim to the throne and kingdom is not denied by Chanakya. In the *Mahabharata* there are at least two references that Duryodhana thought he was elder to Yudhishthira.

When the victors repair to the camp of the vanquished, a significant incident occurs. Krishna directs Arjuna to descend first. The moment Krishna steps down, the great chariot is consumed

in flames. Hit by many celestial weapons, it had been held together as long as Krishna drove it. It is an ominous hint of the passing of superhuman prowess which the subsequent books elaborate. Krishna advises them to spend the night outside this camp. Yudhishthira, terrified of Gandhari's fury because of the unfair killing of Duryodhana, begs Krishna and Vyasa to go in advance to pacify her. This is stated cryptically in section 62. Section 63 is a typical elaboration by a later redacteur where Yudhishthira again addresses Krishna , praising him at length, urging him to the same task. Krishna's address to Dhritarashtra is, in short, that he can only blame his own karma for his plight and not the Pandavas, on whom he has now to depend. To Gandhari he says that what she had foretold has happened. Krishna also tells them that he has intuited Ashvatthama's plot to murder the Pandavas that night and therefore he must hurry back. Ashvatthama vows to Duryodhana to exterminate the Panchalas. He does not mention the Pandavas, which shows that what drives him is taking revenge on the killers of his father. With Duryodhana lustrating him as the last commander-in-chief, the Shalya Parva ends.

The unremitting carnage is lit up by iridescent flashes of images that forcibly unite completely disparate ideas. It is Prof. Lal's inimitable transcreation that brings home the realisation that centuries before the highly acclaimed English Metaphysical poets Vyasa's poetry was replete with such images: "Beautiful the field of battle,/ struck by the hoof-beats of horses,/ like a girl/ scratched by the nails/of her lover." Or, "The battlefield, O raja/covered over/with lifeless, mangled heads/with staring eyes/looked like a spread/of red pundarika-lotuses." Or, "Under their onslaught,/ your warriors teetered/and tottered,/like a young girl besotted with wine." Or, Bhima's mace is, "Indeed like a fragrant sandal-/ paste-and-agaru-unguent/anointed sexually desirable girl,/it was smeared instead/with fat and marrow and blood." When Shalya falls, "the earth/lovingly clasped/that bull-brave hero/to herself,/ Like a lovelorn girl/embracing her lover/to her breasts. Long did he lie there,/passionately enjoying the earth,/covering her with all his limbs,/sleeping with her peacefully."

RECONCILIATION, REVERSALS AND REALISATION

Pradip Bhattacharya

The Complete Asvamedhika Parva of Vyasa's Mahabharata transcreated from the Sanskrit into English by Padma Shri P. Lal, WRITERS WORKSHOP, 2008, 440 pages including maps, genealogical tree. Rs.300 (Special edition with original hand-painted Orissa Pata-chitra Rs.800.)

Transcreated by P. Lal

The Kurukshetra holocaust is over. After the Pyrrhic victory, what does Yudhishthira experience but a wasteland? "Son of man,...you know only...a heap of broken images...Only fear in a handful of dust."

How does the morally sensitive man of Dharma achieve reconciliation after wading through a gory Serbonian bog, trampling over the corpses of kith and kin towards the throne of Hastinapura? Much to the shock of Draupadi and his brothers, instead of joyously quaffing the heady wine of victory, he would rather work out his salvation in a sylvan retreat. For, ever at his back he hears "The rattle of the bones and chuckle spread from ear to ear." After all, he alone has played chess with death, answering the Mortal Lord's riddles with his brothers as the stake. How can he recline at ease on the throne of blood? This model of rectitude, this man who is righteousness incarnate, has more than once done the wrong thing for the right reason. He has gambled away his brothers and their wife; unhesitatingly asked patriarch Bhishma how he may be slain; quibbled so that guru Drona abandons arms; made uncle Shalya sabotage Karna's valour and then speared that uncle to death. All the cataracts of wisdom rushing over him from Bhishma, Vyasa, Narada, Vidura and Krishna in the massive corpus of the Shanti and Anushasana parvas have failed to excise the profound mea culpa.

In section 12 Krishna rebukes Yudhishthira sharply, somewhat as he had done Arjuna: "Don't you remember anything?" Earlier he reprimanded Dhritarashtra and Gandhari for evading their

responsibilities. Krishna points out that Yudhishthira's lack of "*shraddhā*" prevented his learning the meaning of "kama-corrupted karma" though explained to him repeatedly. Krishna provides a simple solution to cut through all intellectual sophistry:

"All crookedness leads to death,
simplicity leads to Brahman.
This is the essence of all wisdom.
The rest is idle babble." (11.4)

He explains the real meaning of the Indra-Vritra myth: Vritra is the enemy lurking within one's self causing delusion. Krishna criticises Yudhishthira for conveniently forgetting the dragging of Draupadi in public and Kichaka kicking her, the exile, the sufferings at the hands of Jatasura, Chitrasena, Jayadratha. It is a new war that has to be fought now.

The battle with Drona and Bhishma
is over– the lonely battle now
is your battle with yourself.
Grasp the glory of your secret spirit
and perform your sva-karma!
No arrows will help you here,
no servants, no relatives.
You alone can help yourself.
You cannot escape the crisis…
You must fight, and you must win. (12.12-15)

There is no point lamenting time and again over the dead-they cannot be revived. "Mine" is what leads to death; "not mine" to eternity. "Kama-control is dharma", rooted in self-discipline. Section 13 has a brilliant passage in which Kama explains how it deludes human beings by shackling them to desires. Therefore, it should be channelled into charity distributed in yajnas. Hence the need for the Horse Sacrifice.

Vyasa, too, criticizes Yudhishthira ("your wisdom is weak") and recommends that the Horse Sacrifice be conducted to earn merit, as Rama and Bharata had done in the past. The wealth needed for this huge ceremony is provided by Vyasa (how often does the author personally intervene in his plot!) who guides him to the gold left by Marutta, one of the very few human kings like Raji and Mandhata whom Indra failed to subdue. The gold Yudhishthira recovers is over 16 crore bharas, returning with it to Hastinapura when Parikshit is a month old.

Section 9 contains a rare dialogue between Indra boasting of

his omnipotence and Agni sarcastically reminding him of his ignominious humbling by Vritra and Chyavana. This time it is Samvarta, Brihaspati's brother, whose sacrifice for Marutta Indra is forced to sanctify. One of the messengers Indra dispatches to Marutta is the gandharva Dhritarashtra. The Kauravas have links with Gandharvas and Nagas. Satyavati's son Chitrangada was killed by a Gandharva with the same name; her grandson shares his name with a Naga and a Gandharva.

Yudhishthira, aware that the era of Kali is approaching and that the raja's character shapes the people's future, rules wisely, inspired by dharma. An idyllic portrait of his reign is given in section 14.

As many as 42 sections are devoted to something quite different. Krishna has been enjoying the company of Arjuna: "To be with you/is to find joy/even in a desolate forest." Now he wishes to return home. A peripeteia occurs here as Arjuna makes a startling disclosure. Being of fickle concentration, he has forgotten what Krishna revealed on the eve of the battle. Krishna reprimands him:

> "I am maha-displeased by your silliness
> in not understanding what I said....
> you seem to lack *shraddhā*
> and power of comprehension." (16.10)

The *Gita* is not a command performance. The divine afflatus cannot be repeated on demand: "Yoked-in-yoga then/I discoursed on Brahma-realisation". As a substitute, Krishna offers Arjuna an ancient history that he must listen to with concentration and without questioning (in the *Gita* he had argued repeatedly). This takes the form of a series of conversations: between a Brahmin named Kashyapa and a perfected Siddha; a Brahmin and his wife (anticipating the Upanishadic one between Vaishampayana's rebellious disciple Yajnavalkya and Maitreyi); Narada and sage Devamata; Parashurama and his manes; finally, a guru and his disciple. All together, this is the *Anugita*: a summation of the doctrine of liberation that, though profound in its intellection, presumably does not soar to spiritual heights beyond Arjuna's ken. Krishna says that for a confused or unreceptive mind this wisdom is unattainable and that none but Arjuna has heard it till now (19.58). The concepts of equanimity (sthitaprajna), Adhibhuta, Adhidaivata, Adhyatman are explained, as also the concept of Vibhutis. Vairagya (renunciation) is celebrated as the key to

achieving nirvana that even the low-born and women can adopt. It takes but six months of dedication with faith and shraddha to attain this yoga (19.66). Gods do not value transcending physical mortality by renouncing the fruits of action. Hence, their realm is for work-obsessed people. It is greed that is the single worst vice. Echoing his ancestor Yayati, Krishna urges: "Slice greed with a sharp sword and happiness is won!" Selflessness, impartiality and absence of desire constitute the supreme path of Dharma. The atman has to be purified by the atman, wiping out all rituals and social formalities to experience freedom.

Much of the symbolism of sacrifices is explained here. It is the ten hotri (priest)-senses who offer the ten sense-objects as libations in the ten fires that are the phenomenal world. The meaning of yajna is service and sacrifice to the divinity Narayana, the soul of all, by ego the *hota*, mind the *adhvaryu*, intellect the *udgata* using truth the shastra-weapon, the dakshina-offering being *apavarga* (emancipation). Animal sacrifice is explicitly condemned (with the rider that in the past this used to be offered to Narayana) and ahimsa extolled as the supreme dharma as we have heard first in the story of Ruru early in the Adi Parva. Instead of the terrifying world-forest of Vidura's parable in Stri Parva, here is Vidyaranya, the mighty forest of Brahma, where the tree of wisdom blooms with fruit of moksha and extends the soothing shade of peace. The *Gita*'s eidetic symbol of the cosmic tree is repeated here twice (sections 35 and 47) with a different significance. Its seed is the unmanifest, its trunk the intellect, its branches self-conceit, the senses its sap, the five elements its ever-flowering tangled branches, leafy, fragrant, laden with bitter and sweet fruit. Two foolish birds sit on this tree: mind and intellect, neither very percipient. But there is another, the atman, the self-knower, the *kshetrajna*. He who slices this tree with the sharp sword of knowledge achieves freedom from birth and death. Krishna repeats the Gita's figure of the nine-gated city fed by three streams of gunas along with a detailed exposition of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas, as also the advice to withdraw one's senses like the tortoise pulling in its limbs. The Gita's symbol of the body-chariot, the mind-charioteer, the intellect-reins, the senses-horses recurs. The guru narrating all this is Krishna and Arjuna's mind is the disciple to whom this wisdom of Adhyatman is a gift of love, which none has heard previously.

We are taken by surprise to find that Shankaracharya's sublime *nirvana-shatakam* has its source in section 28. Another

serendipitous finding is that section 16 contains these lovely verses that the Buddha echoes:

"Again and again I died,
again and again I was reborn...
I rejected the whirling world
and sought refuge
In the *nirakara* formless Divinity...
and so by the grace of my atman
I found the perfection I sought.
I shall not be born again-
No, never more!...
I shall be free,
and working for the welfare of others
I will find my fulfilment."-16.32-40

The Buddha says:

"How many births have I known
Without knowing the builder of this body!...
But now I have seen you, O builder of this body!
All desire is extinct, Nirvana is attained!
The rafters have crumbled, the ridge pole is smashed!
You will not build them again."

–P.Lal: *The Dhammapada*, 153-154

Haridas Siddhantavagish, who edited and translated the Bengal recension of the epic, pointed out that the recital of the *Gita* to Arjuna on the battlefield is stated thrice in this parva (16.5 at the beginning, 19.55 in the middle and 51.49 at the end of the *Anugita*). Similar references occur in the Shanti Parva too. Scholars claiming that the *Gita* is an interpolation have overlooked this.

Krishna returns to Dvaraka and en route meets the sage Uttanka, whom we have met in the Paushya sub-parva of the first book and who motivated Janamejaya to hold the snake sacrifice. In the Ashvamedha Parva account, his guru is not Veda but Gautama whose wife Ahalya demands, as *dakshina*, the earrings of the wife of the king-turned-cannibal, Saudasa-Kalmashapada who devoured Vashishtha's progeny as plotted by Vishvamitra. The sage is furious that Krishna did not enforce peace and caused mass destruction. Krishna stops him from wasting his hard-won ascetic merit in a curse and instructs him about Adhyatman, repeating the concept of avatara and explaining that being born as a human he is forced to act in that fashion and not as the

Omnipotent. It is this clue that Bankimchandra Chatterjee seized upon in his investigation *Krishna Charitra.* Krishna blesses Uttanka not only with a vision of the Vishvarupa, but also persuades Indra to gift the sage Amrita. Indra approaches the parched Uttanka in the desert as a naked hunter, offering him the water streaming from his penis. Uttanka refuses, despite repeated urging. This parallels the Paushya sub-parva incident where Indra asks him to eat a bull's dung and drink its urine, both forms of Amrita, and Uttanka obeys because his guru Veda did so previously. Here, unable to look upon everything with an equal eye, he refuses and loses immortality. As recompense, Krishna assures him that to slake his thirst Uttanka-clouds will invariably appear in the desert to rain sweet water.

The account of the war Krishna gives his father Vasudeva is of interest because of the differences. In it, Shikhandi, not Dhrishtadyumna, leads the Pandava army against Bhishma and fells the patriarch, with no mention of Arjuna's role. Dhrishtadyumna slays weary Drona, with no mention of Yudhishthira's quibbling. Karna is slain by Arjuna, with no reference to his chariot-wheel getting stuck. Shalya, leading three armies, is killed by Yudhishthira. Bhima tracks down Duryodhana and kills him without mention of any blow below the belt. At Subhadra's insistence, Krishna relates how Abhimanyu was deceitfully killed by Drona, Karna, Kripa and Duhshasana's son. Significantly, the role of the Yadava kinsman Kritavarma is omitted.

The obtaining of Marutta's gold begins, significantly, with propitiating Shiva whose presence has waxed, looming over the events more and more. Bhima now directly attributes Arjuna's successes to Shiva's grace. It takes them a month to return with the gold. By then Uttara's son has been still-born and revived by Krishna through an act of truth. Even at that climactic moment the very special place Arjuna holds in his consciousness is made clear once again. Krishna swears by the power of no rift having ever existed between him and Arjuna. Thus Parikshit, the remnant of the line, lives.

The remaining sections recount the roaming of the horse, the battles fought against the slender remnants of descendants of those slain at Kurukshetra and a brief account of the completion of the sacrifice. Only some of the encounters are narrated (Trigarta, Saindhava, Pragjyotisha, Rajagriha, Cedi, Dasharna, Nishada

ruled by Ekalavya's son, Dravida, Andhra, Raudra, Mahishaka, Kolla, Saurashtra, Gokarna, Prabhasa, Dvaraka, Panchanada in the west, Gandhara). The Sindhu queen Duhshala, Dhritarashtra's daughter, approaches Arjuna for mercy, her son having died of fear on hearing of his approach. Anguished, Arjuna rails against the warrior code: "Shame on that which has made me/despatch all my relatives". There are hints that Arjuna is not invincible without Krishna. Twice the Gandiva slips out of Arjuna's grip (against the Trigartas and the Saindhavas). In Pragjyotisha, Bhagadatta's son Vajradatta engages Arjuna for three full days.

Vyasa, master raconteur, grips our interest with unexpected reversals. The epic has several peripiteia. Just when we think that the Pandavas are finally victorious, their sons are murdered. In Manipura (Manalura in many manuscripts, located in southern India near Madurai) Ulupi suddenly appears to motivate Arjuna's son Babhruvahana to fight and kill his father. Then she revives him, having engineered the event to cleanse her husband of the unrighteous slaying of Bhishma, for which the Vasus had cursed him. At Arjuna's request, Babhruvahana is specially honoured in Hastinapura along with Ulupi and Chitrangada. Jaimini's version has an elaborate account of Babhruvahana's battle with the Nagas for obtaining the life-giving gem and Krishna intervening to restore Arjuna's head that the serpents have spirited away.

There is a piquant touch in section 87 where Yudhishthira asks Krishna why Arjuna should have to travel and suffer so much despite his body bearing all auspicious marks. Krishna replies that Arjuna's over-developed "pindike" are the cause. Draupadi casts an annoyed side-glance at Krishna, much to his delight at this sign of her love for Arjuna. "Pindike" has been mistranslated as "cheek-bones". "Pindikaa" means a lump of flesh on shoulders, arms or legs. In view of Arjuna's Odysseus-like incessant roaming, it would connote his exaggerated calves.

The description of the Ashvamedha ritual is drastically abbreviated compared to what we find in the Ramayana and the Shatapatha Brahmana. The chief queen has a major role to play in the sacrifice and spends the night lying with the horse's corpse. Here Draupadi has no role other than sitting beside the sacrificed animal. In the Harivamsa Janamejaya prohibits performance of this yajna in future because of a scandalous incident involving his queen when Indra takes possession of the horse and couples with her. In India today we see the peculiar phenomenon of

businessmen holding this yajna without an animal sacrifice to purify the environment.

The audience presumes that the parva has now drawn to a close, but Vyasa astonishes them yet again. Suddenly a blue-eyed mongoose appears with one side of his pelt golden and laughs to scorn the rich donations the Pandavas are so proud of. It denounces this horse-sacrifice a failure as it does not turn the rest of its pelt golden. Superior by far, it states, was the gift of a handful of parched grain by a fasting Brahmin to a guest who was Dharma himself. This story is yet another lesson imparted by Dharma to Yudhishthira on eschewing greed and anger. "No number of yajnas can make one virtuous"; "Dharma is not happy with maha-luxurious gifts, he prefers the littlest gifts if donated with shraddha and acquired by honest means." That is the anagnorisis, the recognition and realisation of the core truth.

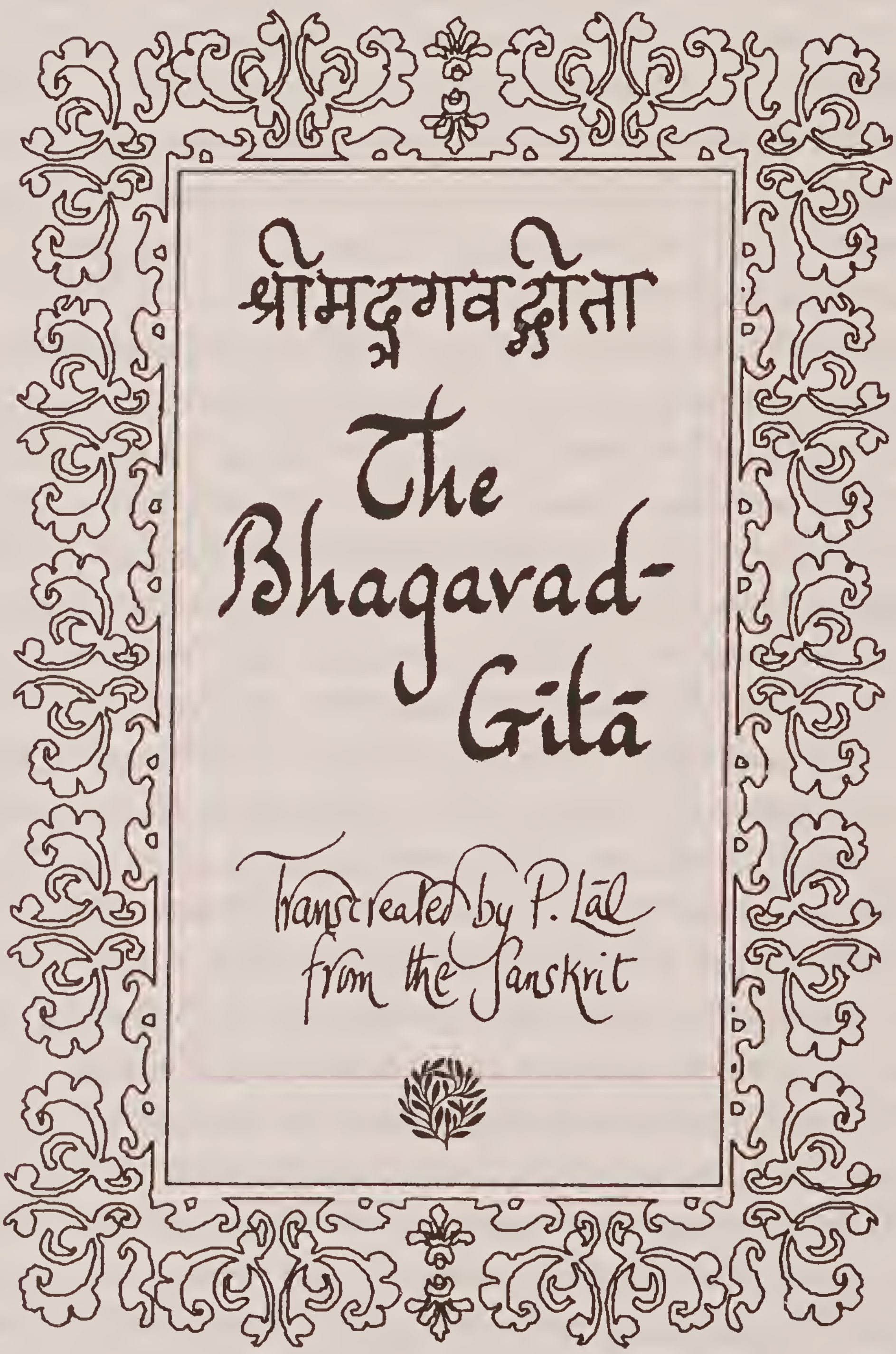
After this we find a fascinating record of the controversy over animal sacrifice. The ascetics and the gods disputed over whether it was better to sacrifice animals, grains or juices. Uparichara Vasu, Satyavati's father, when asked to adjudicate sought to wriggle out of the dilemma by ruling that whatever was available could be used. That evasion consigned him to hell. Agastya performed a twelve-year yajna only with seeds, overcoming Indra's opposition. Thus ahimsa is extolled once again as the supreme virtue. Along with the mongoose episode this provides a clue to when the epic might have acquired its written form. This could be in the time of Ashoka when non-violence to creatures acquired state sanction.

The Lal transcreation rightly omits the Vaishnava-dharma sub-parva of 1700 verses found after this in the Bengal and Southern recensions which is an obvious sectarian interpolation, having nothing to do with the theme of the Ashvamedhika Parva.

This parva is particularly significant for having inspired two very different but remarkable creative works. One is a novel, *The Great Golden Sacrifice*, the last part of Maggi Lidchi Grassi's trilogy on Arjuna's spiritual journey. The other is an ancient composition by Jaimini, one of Vyasa's four disciples, whose Ashvamedha Parva is the only portion of his version of the *Mahabharata* that has survived. Jaimini's work is larger than his preceptor's and quite sensational, featuring the heroism of the sons of heroes slain in the Kurukshetra war. It was so popular that the medieval vernacular retellings of the epic and the Persian version Akbar commissioned used Jaimini instead of Vyasa's

composition for this parva. Unknown to most, its first English translation by Major General Shekhar Sen has recently been published by WRITERS WORKSHOP.

Transcreated by P. Lāl



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RETURN OF THE RHAPSODE

Pradip Bhattacharya

He holds him with his glittering eye

Vyasa, master raconteur, weaves a bewildering skein of threads to create a fascinating many-splendoured web from which there was no escape for the listener in the days of yore and there is still none for the reader today. The thousands of years that separate us from Vyasa have not dimmed the magic of the art that entranced King Janamejaya and Shaunaka and his fellow sages. If proof be needed, here it is:

> Shells were exploding over Leningrad. Enemy bombs were falling on the streets stirring up clouds of dust. On one of those spring days during the siege, Sanscrit language was being heard in the building of the Academy of Sciences on the Neva River embankment, in a room overlooking the side that was safer during the artillery strikes. First, in the original, and then in translation, Vladimir Kalyanov, a specialist on India, was reading Mahabharata, a wonderful monument of Indian literature, to his colleagues, who remained in the besieged city. He had started the translation before the war. He translated during the hard winter of 1941, with no light, no fuel and no bread in the city. Two volumes of books– one published in Bombay and the other in Calcutta– were lying on the table in the room. In the dim light of a wick lamp, he was comparing these two editions of Mahabharata, trying to find the best and the most accurate translation of the Sanscrit into Russian.
>
> When, after the war the first book of Mahabharata-Adi Parva was published in Leningrad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Prime Minister of India, noted with great satisfaction that, even during the hardest times, the translation of the Indian epic into Russian was never interrupted.[1]

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http://www.300.years.spb.ru/eng/3_spb_3.html?id=5

What is it in this epic-of-epics, eight times larger than the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* combined– denounced as "a literary monster" by Winternitz, and as "monstrous chaos" by Oldenberg– that appeals so irresistibly to the modern man in search of his soul, when the audience for which it was composed– the enthroned monarch and the forest-dwelling sage– has long sunk into the dark backward and abysm of time?

Seeking answers to questions such as these, we find a storyteller par excellence laying bare, quite pitilessly, the existential predicament of man in the universe. Vyasa shows us what man has made of man, plumbing the depths of the humiliatingly petty pre-occupations of the Creator's noblest creation. Indeed, the dilemmas the characters find themselves enmeshed in cannot even be glorified as "tragic". Perhaps, that is why we find the epic so fascinating. For, how many of us are cast in the heroic mould? We do not have to strain the imagination to reach out and identify with Yayati or Shantanu. We need no willing suspension of disbelief to understand why the Brahmin Drona should sell his knowledge to the highest bidder, or why Drupada does not protest too much when his daughter is parcelled out among five brothers who had taken him prisoner. Passions do, indeed, spin the plot and we are betrayed by what is false within. Then, as now, there is no need to look for a villain manoeuvring without.

If we resonate in empathy with Arjuna's and Aeneas's *sunt lacrimae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt* (the sense of tears in mortal things), we also thrill with joy on meeting the indomitable spirit of woman in an epic that many misconceive as celebrating a male chauvinist outlook. Whether it is Shakuntala proudly asserting her integrity and berating churlish Dushyanta in open court; or Savitri matching wits with the dread lord himself; or Damayanti and Sukanya turning down importunate gods in favour of mortal Nala and Chyavana; or Devayani demanding that Kacha return her love and imperiously brushing aside a lust-crazed husband; or Madhavi spurning *svayamvara* in favour of forest-life after being gifted by her father to four men to provide them with sons; or Kunti refusing to be perverted into a mindless producer of sons to gratify the hunger of her frustrated husband; or Draupadi setting Kuru elders a question that is never answered or seducing Bhima to slay Kichaka;– time and again it is woman standing forth in all the splendour of her spirited autonomy as a complete human being that rivets our attention and evokes our admiration.

Transcreated by P. Lal

The attempts at translating the longest epic in the world in full make an interesting study. H. Fauche began the first French translation (1863-1870) but died after finishing the 10th book (*Karna Parva*). L. Ballin continued the work till Book 12, when he too died. A new French translation by Guy Vincent and Gilles Schaufelberger has completed four volumes arranged thematically, not following the original sequence. In St. Petersburg, V. Kalyanov started the Russian translation in 1941 and 12 of the 18 books have been completed. In the USA, J.A.B. van Buitenen of Chicago University based his translation on the critical edition and died after finishing the Virata Parva. Two other American Universities are continuing the work, but not in sequence. The other American project by the Clay Sanskrit Library translates the vulgate with Neelakantha's commentary in diglot format and has run out of sponsors.

We have to revert to the 19th century for an almost complete English translation by K.M. Ganguli sponsored by P.C. Roy (1883-1896). Another effort was undertaken a decade later by the Rector of Serampore College, M.N. Dutt (1895-1905). Both are vitiated for either omitting or Latinising passages "for obvious reasons" in the Victorian ambience. In 1968 Professor P. Lal took up the first verse-by-verse transcreation of Vyasa's monumental composition revising it comprehensively in 2005. As of now, 16 of the 18 books have been published, leaving the massive *Shanti* and *Anushasana* Parvas to be completed. In addition a Mahabharata-Katha series is being published with introductions bringing out the significance of certain key episodes. Ganguli had P.C. Ray to sponsor him. Lal transcreates and publishes single-handed. This is the only English version of Vyasa that shifts sensitively from verse to prose and vice-versa, following the complete vulgate text *shloka-by-shloka.*

No one, however, dreamt of recreating the epic as an oral-aural experience. Yet, that is what the *Mahabharata* is. The itinerant rhapsode Ugrashrava Sauti, son of the *suta* Lomaharshana (whose recitation horripilated the audience with a hair-raising experience), recites it to the hermits participating in sage Shaunaka's great sacrificial ritual in the forest of Naimisha. Sauti is reproducing, he tells them, what he had heard Vaishampayana recite to King Janamejaya in the presence of the composer himself during the intervals of the holocaust of Nagas. It was in October 1999, near the turn of the millennium, that Professor P. Lal, D.Litt., Padma Shri and Nehru Fellow, began to read his transcreation to a live

audience. A twenty-first century Sauti had arrived in the Sanskriti Sagar library! Dictated to Ganesha, taught to Vaishampayana who recited it to King Janamejaya, that oral and aural experience is sought to be conveyed to an English-knowing audience, keeping the Indian flavour intact. Rathikanta Basu, CEO of TARA TV, realizing the signal contribution this was making in turning the world's largest epic into a live experience, began to telecast the reading in segments. On the WRITERS WORKSHOP completing fifty years of publication, the Governor of West Bengal, Shri Gopal Krishna Gandhi, released in early 2009 the first instalment of ten DVDs of the telecasts with the text in a companion volume in a gorgeously produced presentation box. Aficionados of Vyasa will be grateful to Tara TV, because the ear catches what the eye has missed in print. For instance, in section 63, verse 102 the transcreation erroneously has Kunti emerging from a yajna-fire, having misread "jajne" ("beget"–Surya and Kunti beget Karna–for "yajne", "from yajna").

Those who have read the professor's earlier editions (beginning with monthly fascicules in 1968), or his riveting valedictory address to the Sahitya Akademi's 1987 national seminar on the epic, will be mistaken if they give this recording a miss. The introductory talk is a completely new and brilliant overview of the key issues in the *Mahabharata*, unique as much for its insights as for its style. The Professor is, after all, at his best delivering a lecture. It is spiced with inimitable touches of punning sarcasm ("This is the mother of all epics; in fact, the grandmother of all epics"; "The battle of Kurukshetra– call it genocide, parricide, gurucide, suicide-whatever; such brotherly butchery!" Or, "The fathering of Yudhishthira by Vidura is one of the best kept open secrets"). Eagerly we turn to the companion volume for savouring it in print, only to be sorely disappointed: it is missing. Let us, therefore, try to capture some of those piercing rays of illumination.

Professor Lal begins with a question: "When, how why did a mini-Bharata, a *katha* of 20,000 *shlokas* (*sic.* the figure is 24000) become a *Mahabharata,* a *kavya* of more than one lakh shlokas?" Sauti tells us that it took three years for Vyasa, composing daily, to complete his *kavya* (1.62.55, 66)). Perhaps the most famous *shloka* of the epic, the most quoted, says Professor Lal, is the one that says, "What is in this epic on Dharma, Artha, Kama, Moksha may be elsewhere. What is not in this epic is nowhere else" (1.62.67). Is Vyasa, then, suggesting that the *kavya* has an answer

to every problem in life, provide a cure-all for all ills of world, a universal panacea? Strangely enough, that is what he is claiming. All scriptures and *shastras* were weighed against it and the *Mahabharata* tipped the scale, "heavier than all those other respected heavies. And as it was heavier, had more 'bhaara', it was known as *Bhaarata*. The perfect panacea." But there is another meaning of the word that Professor Lal overlooks: "war" (*cf.* Bhasa's *Karnabhaara*). Emperor Akbar knew this. That is why, when he commissioned the Persian adaptation in 1582, he named it *Razm Nama*, the Book of War.

"What, in medical jargon, is the Rx?" queries the Professor. This is what worries Arjuna on Kurukshetra, having the deepest conscientious objection to war. Krishna gives him options: various yogas, the bloody end of the Dvapara Yuga, the extinction of the kshatriyas. Krishna will not fight for him-that is his business. "You decide what is right for you. You are free to choose– *yatha icchasi tatha kuru*," he says. Arjuna responds, "You are confusing me with bewildering choices– this isn't fair. Tell me that one truth by which I may know you." The point, Professor Lal asks, is there a one truth, a single magic formula, presented by Vyasa in this epic tale?

Perhaps because of the multiple layers of meaning Vyasa insisted that his stenographer, *lekhaka*, Ganesha understand each word before taking it down. "For what is the point of listening without understanding and assimilating? The language enshrines ideas and values; the style is only the tool. What matters is the meaning." Take the four *purusharthas*, for instance, the fourfold goal of human life. What is Vyasa recommending: should we chase after money or the meaning of money (Artha); lust or love (Kama) and at the root of both is sex and you cannot do without sex; ritual or spirituality (Dharma); run away from life or transcend it (Moksha)? For Professor Lal, Vyasa's one message is: transform yourself– do not deny, do not denounce, do not blame. Transform money into the meaning of money; lust into love; ritual into spiritual; escape into liberation. But, as Krishna-Narayana (divinity in humanity), tells Arjuna-Nara (humanity in divinity), "You are free to choose." Our problem is: why does pacifist Arjuna turn militarist? Why does Yudhishthira not refuse to lie? Why does Bhima hit below the belt? Why does Arjuna kill Bhishma and Karna unfairly? Why does Nara take the ignoble way to victory, which, each time, is suggested by Narayana? Questions that tease

us out of thought.

So many characters; such a bewildering Cecil B. DeMilleian cast! Who is the hero to focus our attention upon? The benediction gives some hints– though not very satisfactory.

narayanam namaskritya, naramchaiva narottamam /
devim sarasvatim chaiva tato jaya udirayet //

"We namaskara Narayana, Nara and Narottaṃa
We namaskara goddess Sarasvati and utter 'jaya', 'victory'."

Professor Lal chooses a different version occurring first in the *Bhagavata Purana* where "Sarasvatim chaiva" is replaced by "Sarasvatim Vyasam", which is obviously something that Vyasa himself would never have composed in his own honour. It is a modification added by the Suta reciting the received epic, praising the composer who, by then, is seen as a part-avatara of Vishnu. Jaimini, one of the disciples to whom Vyasa taught the epic, also uses this benediction in his version of the *Ashvamedha Parva*, understandably paying tribute to his guru.

Is Vyasa the protagonist– forefather and partial incarnation of Vishnu, of divinity personified as preserver of universe? Or, asks Professor Lal, is "jaya" the hero, i.e. Arjuna, who is also Nara? He is mistaken here because Arjuna's name is not Jaya but Vijaya, along with Phalguna, Jishnu, Kiriti, Shvetavahana, Bibhatsu, Partha, Savyasachi and Dhananjaya. "Jaya", of course, is the original name of poem.

The clue, Prof. Lal says, lies right before us, as in the best detective stories, and we fail to see it. He points to the first word in the opening invocation, "Narayana", who is Krishna, the crux of the *Mahabharata*, without whom it is Shakespeare's *Hamlet* without the prince of Denmark. It is all about "wonder-working war" in which Krishna, the omniscient hero, is present but will not fight. Nara will get no direct physical help. Narayana knows the best route to travel, but will not take us until we, Nara, tell him where we want him to take us.

> He is the conscience that clarifies the confusion. If we still remain confused, that is our problem, our karma, our tragedy, our hell. You can't blame Krishna. It is Gandiva-wielding Arjuna's decision to fight even after he is convinced that killing gurus, relatives, friends is a heinous crime.

The startling fact is that he is given a *vishvarupa darshana* of Krishna's divinity on the battlefield, yet not one of the 18 *akshauhinis* of soldiers sees or hears a word of the dialogue. Only

Arjuna sees and hears. "It is a private struggle between his good and anti-good *gunas*, an inspiring conflict of conscience." Why does he decide to fight and choose war despite Krishna's warning that it will lead to their clans' extinction? Krishna is the omniscient hero who advises Yudhishthira how to get Drona to lay down arms. Yudhishthira could have refused to tell the half lie. Why did he not? Bhima cannot defeat Duryodhana in fair fight unless he follows Krishna's hint to hit below the belt. Why does he take that hint? Unarmed Karna and Bhishma are slain by Arjuna also on his advice. Why does Nara take the expedient, selfish way and reject the noble?

Yet, we find that the first Arabic summary of the epic by Abu-Saleh in 1026 AD is astonishingly innocent of this overwhelming presence. Is Krishna's role in the war a later interpolation?

After the war Vidura, having tried to console Dhritarashtra with the story of the man in the well (that travelled to Europe to become the biblical "Barlaam and Josaphat"), teaches Yudhishthira a lesson when he wishes to commit suicide after the war finding a devastated kingdom, all kith and kin dead, by suggesting that he first find out what is common to river, tree, earth and woman: *nadi, vanaspati, prithivi* and *stri*. Yudhishthira turns back from suicide because he finds this out: slice a river and it flows on, fertilising the land; cut a branch and new shoots sprout; pollute the land and it produces food; exploit a woman and she gives progeny and ensures the continuity of civilization–all without casting blame or taking revenge. Physical suffering is transformed into fruitful creativity. Yudhishthira will blame no one, neither himself nor Krishna, but rule nobly, creatively.

> Learn! Vyasa urges. Learn from my life how to live as human beings should. For if you don't, calamity awaits you and all around you. *Utthishtha*, stand up, wake up, learn and... *charaiveti*, keep moving. No regrets, no blame, no accusation; only transformation of pain and suffering into creativity and progress. That is the lesson of the *Mahabharata*.

Yet, at the very end, in verses renowned as the "Bharata Savitri" why does Vyasa exclaim,

> *urdhvabahur viraumyesa naca kashchich chhrinoti me /*
>
> *dharmad arthash ca kamash ca sa kimartham na sevyate //*
>
> "I raise my arms and I shout
>
> but no one listens!

From Dharma come wealth and pleasure–
why is Dharma not practised?"

There are a few errors, as when the Professor states that Parikshit was assassinated by Takshaka because he insulted Takshaka's father, a rishi. Again, he says that Vyasa narrates the account to Janamejaya, while it is Vaishampayana who does so in Vyasa's presence. A little later Professor Lal says that Vaishampayana who has heard it from another suta narrates it to Janamejaya at the snake sacrifice. Actually, it is the *suta* Sauti who has heard it from Vaishampayana at the sacrifice.

Professor Lal provides a brief background before beginning the recitation. He gives the time of the war roughly at 3000 BC, the exact year being a matter of dispute. It is a pyrrhic victory. The kingdom is handed over to Parikshit, the grandson of Arjuna, but entrusted to Yuyutsu, Dhritarashtra's youngest son by a Vaisya woman, to supervise. Indraprastha with its wondrous hall of illusions is left to the Yadava Vajra, Krishna's great grandson. So who finally was the victor in this fratricidal holocaust? Duryodhana or Yudhishthira? In heaven Yudhishthira is shocked to find Duryodhana and his brothers ensconced on golden thrones, with no sign of his brothers and Draupadi! "This is not *svarga*!" he exclaims.

Parikshit rules for 60 yrs. His son Janamejaya organises a massive snake sacrifice to annihilate all snakes because one– Takshaka, a terrorist who plays a very important role in the entire *Mahabharata*– fatally bit his father. By this time a century has passed since the war ended. Janamejaya is very curious to know exactly what happened. He has heard conflicting reports about his ancestors; varying and worrying accounts about how, why and when the gruesome carnage began that ended the Dvapara Yuga, wiping out both armies.

> The entire epic is a flashback a century since the war. Janamejaya wants to know about his family tree, its roots, shoots and fruits– *mula*, *sthula*, and *phula*– whether sweet or bitter... The starting point of the greatest epic in the world is all about family roots, which one human being wants to know. For, how else can he know himself– for isn't he the latest leaf on that tree?

And so his ancestor Vyasa narrates (Professor Lal is mistaken; it is Vyasa's disciple Vaishampayana who recites during the intervals of the sacrificial ritual) this story, which is also a history,

an *itihasa*, (so it is, so it happened), the autobiography of one man (Vyasa himself), a record of one family (the Kaurava-Pandava cousins), a chronicle of one country Bharata that is India, and a symbolic universal drama of mankind slowly evolving through dissension and war to self-knowledge and peace– hopefully." It is fundamentally an aural epic spoken by Vyasa to his stenographer Ganesha who is pledged to understand every word before he takes it down.

We would have benefited considerably if, in his introduction, Professor Lal had touched on the major differences between the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata*. The former shows a society where nobility and gentility are the rule rather than the exception. Realpolitik, zero-sum games, amorality prevail in Vyasa's portrayal. The society of the *Mahabharata* does not know sages of awesome puissance like Vashishtha and Vishvamitra. Duryodhana and Jayadratha give rishis short shrift with impunity. The titanic figures haunting Valmiki's forest and Lanka are scaled down and despatched without difficulty by Bhima who, instead, meets his match in Duryodhana. Where Valmiki paints his characters in black and white, presenting an idealistic picture, Vyasa's protagonists are in shades of gray, more easy to identify with and very realistic.

Professor Lal's is the only English translation that sensitively shifts from verse to prose and vice-versa as the original demands, following the complete vulgate version *shloka-by-shloka*. As he does not leave out passages as the critical edition does, it is possibly the most complete edition of Vyasa's composition that is available. However, it does not have many passages occurring in the southern and eastern recensions (such as Arjuna's wooing of Subhadra disguised as a hermit, Draupadi's previous births as Nalayani, Mudgalani, Vedavati, Abhimanyu's marriage to Balarama's daughter Surekha etc.). The discs cover the introduction (memorable for Dhritarashtra's plangent lament *tada nashamse vijayeya Sanjaya*, "Then I no longer hoped for victory, Sanjaya"), the list of contents, the chapters on Paushya, Puloma, Astika (including the archetypal churning of the ocean, the wondrous story of Garuda and the snake sacrifice), the partial incarnations (including Vyasa's birth and the war summarised), cutting off abruptly at verse 21 of section 66 of the Sambhava sub-parva recounting the descendants of Brahma's sons.

The audience would find the DVDs more useful if each carried

some indication of the sections covered. Further, if Professor Lal introduced each Parva/sub-parva along the lines of his vastly illuminating general introduction in disc 1, it would be of immense benefit, as would a matching bookmark for the accompanying volume.

The reading is uniformly mellifluous in Professor Lal's impeccable Indo-Oxonian accent, interspersed with his recitation of significant Sanskrit *shlokas* from the original. The accompanying background music of temple bells and blowing of conches is delicately muted so that nothing interferes with the camera's concentration on the rhapsode. One might feel that the unaltered sameness of the studio palls, but that is the price we pay in modern times for having replaced seating under verdant shadows of swaying branches with the unchanging décor of airconditioned recording studios.

We look forward to the subsequent instalments and trust that the next companion volume will contain the general introduction and individual parva prefaces so that we can tease out the implications at length by having recourse to them in print. Do not look, however, for colophons, chapter headings, annotations, glossaries, list of contents– the rhapsode does not need them!

Let us thrill to the evocative verses describing Creation transcreated with biblical resonance:

At first, there was no light,
no radiance, only darkness;
then was born the egg of Brahma,
exhaustless and mighty seed of life...
from which flow being and non-being.

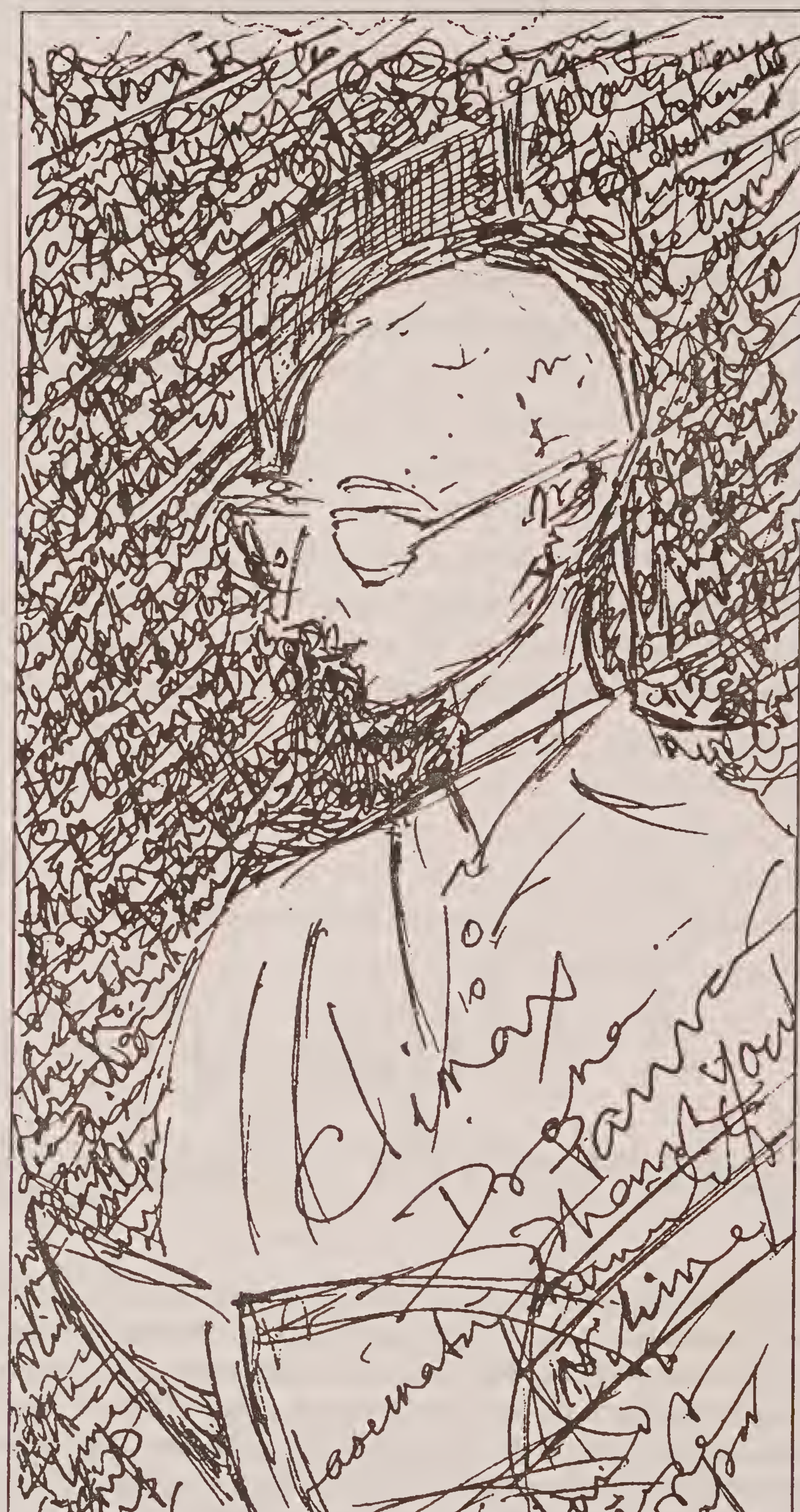
Savour the riveting description of Meru, evoking profound archetypal memories:

There is a mountain called Meru,
a flaming heap
of splendour.
Sunlight falls on it
and scatters
at the summit.
It is golden: it glitters:
It cannot be measured:...
Mind cannot
conceive of it.

Delight in the lovely description of what happens when Garuda lets fall the massive bough on a mountain:

They fell on the ground,
these gold-bright trees,
They were coloured with the gold
of mountain minerals,
They looked like the long rays
of the flaming sun.

[Pradip Bhattacharya retired as Additional Chief Secretary to the Government of West Bengal, is India's only International HRD Fellow (Manchester University). His doctoral dissertation is on the *Mahabharata*.]



P. Lāḍ reading the 334th weekly Sunday session of his English transcreation of Vyāsa's Mahābhārata on 2 July 2006 at G. D. Birla Sabhagar, Kolkata.

[*Sketch by Nilima Sen-Gangopadhyay*]

Writers Workshop
Indian Creative Writing in English

WRITERS WORKSHOP was founded in 1958. It consists of a group of writers who agree in principle that English has proved its ability, as a language, to play a creative role in Indian literature, through original writing and transcreation from India, the Commonwealth, and other English-using territories. Discussions are held on Sunday morning at 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700 045, India, and diffusion done through a series of Bird-logo books issued under the WORKSHOP imprint. Since October 1999 the Sunday one-hour morning session is devoted to a śloka-by-śloka reading by P. Lal at the Sanskriti Sagar Library in Calcutta, of his complete English transcreation of the Mahābhārata of Vyāsa, planned to continue for the next ten years, till the epic is completed. Since 1971 the WORKSHOP has laid increasing emphasis on its publishing programme. A complete, descriptive 90-page illustrated checklist of over 3200 books and cassettes is available for Rs. 20.

The WORKSHOP is non-profit and non-political. It involves writers who are sympathetic to the ideals and principles commonly accepted as embodied in creative writing; it is concerned with practice not theorising, helpful criticism not iconoclasm, the torch not the sceptre. Not impressed by desire for quick fame and money by pandering to the increasing sexual over-permissiveness and explicitness in 20th and 21st century "literature", and religious intolerance and hatred masquerading as "freedom in creative writing", WRITERS WORKSHOP upholds the primacy of stable ethical and moral values, and prefers writing that enshrines humanist principles, which are of special relevance in the context of the multi-cultural historical palimpsest of the civilisation known as India.

Further details are available from the Director, P. Lal, at the WORKSHOP address: 162/92 Lake Gardens, Kolkata 700045, India (Phone: 2417-4325, 2417-2683 and 3095-9727 E-mail: profsky@cal.vsnl.net.in) Browse in the WW Book Nook Website: www.writersworkshopindia.com

Writers Workshop ~ A Credo by P. Lal

Glory be to Mahakala. It is now 2010. I am four score and two. Time for some home truths. Because WRITERS WORKSHOP has close to 3500 separate titles in its checklist (published over 50 years 1958-2008), and because it has averaged around 100 titles each year since 1995, there is a misconception that it is an Indian publishing leviathan. (No other publisher in India has that many titles on its annual list.) The truth is much less awesome. WRITERS WORKSHOP has no office; it operates from my residence, from the living-room and a multi-purpose bedroom. It has no secretary; my "secretary" is a three-tiered Godrej filing cabinet. It has no editor, no "readers" to inspect, evaluate and OK typescripts; I do all three tasks. It has no proofreader; I perform the nitty-gritty of deleting, accreting and correcting. It has no "assistant" to acknowledge or follow up letters; I do all that too. It has no typewriter; I reply in longhand. (From 2004, kowtowing to the hi-tech convenience, I sometimes seek help from my computer-savvy grand-daughter Shuktara to e-mail replies to insistent and urgent enquiries for WW information.) It has no retail or wholesale distribution "outlet"; there is only a cubby-hole of a kiosk at my residence (8 feet x 4 feet roughly) called the Book Nook, where a dedicated young assistant attends to intermittent sales of WW books. This Lake Gardens kiosk opened in 1998, 40 years after WW's inception.

How then has WW survived? Without plush foundations to back it, without advertisement, without large-hearted patrons? Initially, by the skin of our teeth (1958-1964). Then (1965-1990) by my visits to hard currency El Dorados, specially Great Britain, the USA and Australia on lecture assignments and visiting professorships on two dozen or so occasions, and pumping the shekels thus earned to keep alive a gasping ideal.

Alternative publishing is desperately needed wherever commercial publication rules. WW is *not* a professional publishing house. It does not print well-known names; it makes names known and well known, and then leaves them in the loving clutches of the so-called "free" market (which can be and is very cut-throat and very expensive). It is not sad, it is obnoxious, to plead, as publishers do, "I will not publish poetry because it does not sell." Most English book publishing today in boom-time India and outside is book-dumping. There is a nexus between high-profile PR-conscious book publishers, semi-literate booksellers, moribund public and state libraries, poorly informed and nepotistic underlings in charge of book review pages and supplements of most national newspapers and magazines, and biased bulk purchases of near worthless books by bureaucratic institutions set up – believe it or not! – to inform, educate and elevate the reading public.

I strongly believe that, instead of catering and pandering to existing lowest-common-denominator popular taste, a self respecting writer should create a literary taste by which he or she may be enjoyed by discriminating readers.

Because WW goes in for serious creative writing, and because there is no satisfactory distribution network for such writing, its terms of publication are unique. I must be the only publisher in the world who knows when and where every book is sold; I have the name and address of every buyer of a WW book. Upon my acceptance of a typescript, an agreement form is sent to the writer. *All* copyright remains with the writer. Poetry appears in 350 copies; prose in 500. Ten per cent (35 copies of the poetry book, 50 of the prose) is given in lieu of royalty. The writer is also expected to make an advance purchase of 100 copies of his or her book, for sale or distribution as he or she pleases. Printing is done in Calcutta hand-operated presses, situated in the residences of their owners. The whole process is a cottage industry style low-key entrepreneurship, in the belief that small is not only beautiful but viable as well. Vanity and sponsored publishing? Yes, I am humanly vain about it and I do sponsor what I think is good writing. If any lover of literature will offer to subsidise, with no strings attached, striking new work by talented Indian poets, fiction-writers and belles-lettrists, please get in touch with me. The gesture will be acknowledged, appreciated, accepted, and implemented. Such Good Samaritan generosities, not market forces, are at the root of civilised and significant publishing the world over.

For more information, browse in the WW IndEngLit Website: www.writersworkshopindia.com

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